

**AN ARISTOCRACY OF VIRTUE:
THE PROTAGOREAN BACKGROUND TO THE PERICLEAN FUNERAL SPEECH IN
THUCYDIDES**

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

The Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences and the Department of Classics in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2013

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
THE DIETRICH SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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University of Pittsburgh, 2013

In this dissertation I argue that the theory of relativism developed by the sophist Protagoras of Abdera served as a rationalization for democracy that was incorporated into the Athenian political culture as an integral part of its basic worldview. Using Plato's *Protagoras* and *Theaetetus*, as well as the fragments of Protagoras, I first offer a comprehensive reconstruction of the sophist's political thought. Since the human individual is an autarkic and autonomous entity whose perceptions and judgments of reality are veridical and incorrigible, the only form of government that allows him to live in community with others without violating his basic identity is democracy.

After discussing Protagoras' political theory, I analyze the evidence concerning his life and friendship with Pericles and conclude that Protagoras was in a position that enabled him to exert an influence on the Athenian democracy. I then examine the funeral speech composed for Pericles by Thucydides in his *History* and argue that the description Pericles gives of the Athenian political system recalls in both concept and language not only Protagoras' political thinking, but his relativist philosophy as well. Turning then to Protagoras' rhetorical program, summed up in the claim "to make the weaker logos the stronger," I examine it as an integral supplement to his political theory and conclude that it was a mechanism for securing genuine consensus in the citizen-body. I then examine the rhetorical aspect of Pericles' funeral speech

and find that it enacts this Protagorean rhetorical program in an effort to create greater unanimity in the Athenian state after the first year of war.

Finally, in order to account for this Protagorean dimension in Thucydides' characterization of Pericles, I analyze Thucydides' description of the plague that struck Athens shortly after the war began and attempt to show that it contains conceptual and verbal allusions to both Pericles' speech and Protagoras' thought. On the basis of these allusions I suggest that Thucydides incorporated this Protagorean dimension in his portrait of Pericles in order to point to the sophist's relativism as a crucial step in the eventual espousal of Realist politics by the Athenian state.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Of all those who by their help made this dissertation possible (and they are many) I would like to thank in particular Dr. Harry Avery, whose suggestions and corrections greatly improved this work and whose encouragement ensured its completion. I would also like to thank Dr. Mark Possanza and Dr. Nicholas Jones, who offered their invaluable assistance and guidance, as well as Dr. James Allen, whose challenges were as stimulating as they were daunting. I thank my parents, Robert and Vicki, whose instruction and support deserve far greater *θρεπτήρια* than this *opusculum* can render. Above all, I thank my wife Michelle. What she did as I studied and wrote, and the manner in which she did it, was, and will be, a constant professional and personal inspiration.

1.0 INTRODUCTION: THE JUSTIFICATION OF DEMOCRACY

In this dissertation I argue that the theory of relativism developed by the sophist Protagoras of Abdera became a significant element in the Athenian democratic political theory and in the opinion of Thucydides exerted an influence on the direction the Athenian state took towards political Realism shortly after the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. Before I can begin, however, I must address two preliminary issues. These issues concern the relationship of theory and practice in the history of the Athenian democracy, and the previous scholarship that addresses Protagoras as a significant contributor to the theoretical justification of the full, participatory democracy that flourished in Athens during the second half of the fifth century BC.

1.1 A DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL THEORY

The origin of the Athenian democracy is a good illustration of the complicated relationship between theory and practice. One might argue that a theory of popular rule came before, and in part caused, the emergence of democracy in Athens in the fifth century BC;¹ one could deny theory any place at all during the initial stages;² or in the spirit of compromise one might appeal to the complexity of social and political institutions and the formative role of ideology, and agree, e.g. with Ober, “that practice and ideology interact to create democracy, and that theory is

¹ Cf. Cartledge 2009: 57-62; Ostwald 1969: 161-173. See also Robinson 1997 & 2007 for a survey of the development of popular rule in Greece before the development of democracy in Athens.

² So Forrest 1966: 103; Davies 2003: 319-335. Cf. Sealey 1964: 11-22; 1981: 125-134.

posterior.”³ During the forty-six years between the approval of Cleisthenes’ measures in 508/7 and the passing of Ephialtes’ bills in 462/1 the Athenian state experienced momentous challenges: two invasions by the Persian superpower, the leadership of the Greek cities in and around the Aegean and a deterioration in its relations with the major military power of the Greek mainland, Sparta. These historical pressures are enough to suggest that in the last analysis democracy was a hard, experimental, intuitive process involving the gradual refinement of initially innovative, perhaps proto-democratic, ideas. Ober is therefore probably right in suggesting a complex, though not theory-driven, origin.

On the other hand, whether or not a systematic explanation was *ever* developed is an entirely different question. The scholarly consensus appears to have been that Greek thinkers did try, after the emergence of democracy, to explain its success, rationalize its principles and justify its continuance. For instance, Ernest Barker pointed to Protagoras’ defense of the Athenian Assembly in Plato’s *Protagoras* as supplying a “fundamental argument for the democratic cause.”⁴ A. H. M. Jones contended that a democratic theory existed, but had not been transmitted in the source-material, which was overwhelmingly antidemocratic. He therefore attempted to reconstruct its major features by examining the theoretical utterances preserved in the “scattered evidence” of orators, historians and philosophers,⁵ while Eric Havelock pointed to the sophists and argued that they, taken as a whole, developed a justification for democracy and worked out rules and procedures for free debate and decision-making.⁶

³ 1989: 20n40.

⁴ 1918: 152.

⁵ 1953: 3.

⁶ 1957: ch. 8-9.

Around this same time the idea of a democratic political theory was challenged by M. I. Finley, who denied that “an articulated democratic theory ever existed in Athens,”⁷ but did not discuss the matter in any detail and at any rate later modified his view.⁸ Defending the original view, Donald Kagan supplemented Jones’ article with his own examination of fifth and fourth century writers, in an effort to reconstruct “the ideas and principles which composed the political theory of Greek democracy,”⁹ while Ellen and Neal Wood (echoing Barker) analyzed the Great Speech of Protagoras as evidence for a democratic political theory.¹⁰ In the spirit of Finley’s denial, Nicole Loraux maintained that there was no “*written* (her italics) theory of democracy” and additionally that none was to be found in the Athenian epitaphioi.¹¹ On the other hand, Cynthia Farrar found various versions of a democratic theory in the work of Protagoras, Democritus and Thucydides¹² and Robin Osborne determined that the development of a democratic theory was likely in light of what he interprets as the democratic ideology of exclusiveness.¹³ Most recently, Eric Robinson argued for an historical connection between democracy and sophistic thought by pointing out that many of the cities the sophists hailed from were experiencing popular changes in the first half of the fifth century.¹⁴ Thus all in all, with the exception of a few challenges, Classical scholarship has more or less reached a consensus that either Greek thinkers or the Athenians themselves, or both, attempted to place democracy in a theoretical framework.

⁷ 1962: 9.

⁸ Specifically, he later saw a justification of ἰσθηγορία in Protagoras’ Great Speech (1973: 28, 94).

⁹ 1965: 73-95.

¹⁰ 1978: 129.

¹¹ 1986: 179, 172-220. She is however silent as to whether a theory existed *at all*.

¹² 1988. See below, sub-subsection 1.3.2.1.

¹³ 2010: 33-4.

¹⁴ 2007.

1.2 EVIDENCE OF THEORETICAL THINKING

Is this consensus well-founded? One might argue *prima facie* that it is, since it simply taxes credulity to suppose that no Athenian thinker or politician ever felt compelled to legitimize a form of government which through outstanding victories over a foreign aggressor and an undisputed Aegean thalassocracy had made Athens, in economic and cultural, if not in military, terms, the premier Greek power. One would think that such an elevated status demanded legitimization of the political system that made it possible. But, such *a priori* reasoning aside, there are other compelling reasons that suggest a democratic political theory was indeed consciously developed.

1.2.1 The Fight for History

The first concerns the political “ownership” of Cleisthenes. In a famous passage Herodotus identifies Cleisthenes as the founder of the democracy, then proceeds to trace his descendants along the line that leads to Pericles (6.131). The suggestion is that there was a close relationship between Periclean politics and the revered founder of the democracy. However, this relationship did not go unchallenged. Plutarch records how Cimon challenged Ephialtes’ activity and tried to restore the judicial powers of the Areopagus and τὴν ἐπὶ Κλεισθένους ἐγείρειν ἀριστοκρατίαν (*Cim.* 15.2). The background to the passages appears to be a dispute between Cimonians and Pericleans on the rights to Cleisthenes as the originator of their respective – and opposed – platforms. Without discussing which side might have been right (if either),¹⁵ it is more important

¹⁵ The view that Cleisthenes operated on sincerely held principles was defended by Ehrenberg 1950: 537-47; 1973: 89-103, but was challenged by D. M. Lewis 1963: 287-309, who argued that Cleisthenes was a disinterested statesman inasmuch as he saw the need to break old power structures with an innovative arrangement (307-8), but was ever the politician in scattering the Alcmaeonids over three tribes (308), and recently by Ober 1993: 260-86, who argues that the success and final form of the Cleisthenic arrangement was ultimately due to the self-

to note that such attempts to claim a founder typically reflect an effort to legitimize one's policies and that legitimizing one's policies presupposes a party self-consciousness. Thus the dispute between the Cimonians and Pericleans over ownership of Cleisthenes suggests that the Ephialtean reforms occasioned self-reflection and self-justification in abstract, theoretical terms for the major political positions.

Similarly, dramatic and historical sources dating from the 460s to the 420s offer examples of abstract thinking on the democracy.¹⁶ What is noteworthy about these passages is that they are by and large agonistic. They defend the superiority of democracy over the alternatives of monarchy and oligarchy. This agonistic character makes an important point: Democracy was the novelty, the cultural aberration. As such, it, not oligarchy or monarchy, bore the burden of proof.

1.2.2 Theoretical Terminology

Another reason lies in linguistic evidence. The political terminology of the second third of the fifth century BC presupposes theoretical discussions on democracy. In an interesting article, R. Brock examined the language which both democrats and non-democrats employed in their sloganeering and mutual criticism and found that democratic terminology was in general a redefinition, re-division or theoretical refutation of pre-existing aristocratic language. These findings led him to conclude that "the Athenians were perfectly capable of justifying democracy in theoretical terms."¹⁷

mobilization of the people in a "spontaneous riot" (276) against Cleomenes' and Isagoras' attempt to dissolve the Solonian Council of 400 (278-9).

¹⁶ E. g. A. *Supp.* 604; Hdt. 3.80-82; Th. 2.36-41, 6.38-40; E. *Supp.* 403-462. For the democratic elements in Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, see Robinson 1997: 46-47.

¹⁷ 1991: 169.

1.2.3 A Cultural Revolution

In addition to this political, literary and linguistic evidence, there are also good historical reasons for looking for a democratic political theory. During the eleven years from 462/1 to 451/0 Athens underwent nothing short of a reformulation of its government. The series of measures Ephialtes had passed in 462/1 transferred important powers hitherto exercised by the Areopagus to the Council of Five Hundred, the Assembly and the Courts. These included the vetting process for officials entering office (*dokimasia*) and their examination upon leaving office (*euthyna*).¹⁸ As a result, city officials were obliged to conduct themselves in a way acceptable to the *Demos*, not the Areopagus. Also, as Wade-Gery argued compellingly, the jury-courts (*dikasteria*) were established around this time.¹⁹ His argument is epigraphical. A decree (*IG* I³10) concerning Athenian-Phaselite relations in which the polemarch is spoken of as a true judge is to be dated a few years after 469.²⁰ If this is correct, it means another consequence of the Ephialtean reforms was that the *Heliaea*, hitherto an appeals court, became the court of first and last instance, where eupatrid and commoner alike submitted to a panel of his peers, drawn from every Solonian

¹⁸ Rhodes 1992: 71.

¹⁹ 1958: 192. So, too, Smith 1925: 118-9 (whose arguments are not discussed by Wade-Gery). Cf. Rhodes 1985a: 168-9, 204n1, 210, who thinks the division of the *Heliaea* into *dikasteries* was a result of Ephialtes' reforms, and that it took time for this new practice to replace the personal jurisdiction of the archons. See Hansen 1978: 141-43 for the view that the *dikasteries* go back to the time of Solon.

²⁰ For recent acceptance of the high chronology, see Meiggs and Lewis 1988: 66-69; Thür 2004: 38-39. The latter, however, denies that Il. 9-10 (*παρ[ὰ τῷ πολέμαρχῳ]*) have any value for dating the establishment of the *dikasteries* because a) the phrase could refer to the introductory phase of a legal action and b) the active *καταδικάσ[ει]* in Il. 18-19 is not preferable to Dittenberger's passive *καταδικάσ[θῃ]*. The second argument, it appears to me, is the crux. For, if the active is to be restored, then the polemarch is the one who condemns – a role inconsistent with the later *ἀνάκρισις*. Accordingly, Thür prefers the passive, but unfortunately does not address the restoration *[ε]ι μὲν* which Wade-Gery (1958: 181n1) considers "virtually certain" (Dittenberger *SIG* 57 had read *Λ* for *Μ* and restored it as *[τοῦτο δ' ὅφε]ίλεν*). This is an important point, as it would preclude a subjunctive. For the argument for the low chronology, see Jameson 2000-03: 23-29. The most significant challenge to Wade-Gery's argument came from Sealey 1964: 17, who cites Pl. *Lg.* 958c2-6 in order to show that even in jury-courts the presiding magistrate (*ἀρχή*) could be said to *καταδικάζειν*. However, Plato is after special effect. He uses the word in a polypoton which stresses the audacity of the offender. This special emphasis strongly suggests that Plato is not being here as mindful of "legalese" as an inscription would be.

property bracket. Wade-Gery aptly calls the change “an experiment of committing justice to the unlearned.”²¹

Other consequences of the reforms were just as drastic. A rotating committee of fifty councilors (prytaneis) drawn from the Five Hundred was appointed, in place of the nine archons, to see to the day to day affairs of the Council and preside at meetings of the Assembly.²² As a result, the major legislative organ, the Assembly, was managed by a randomly selected cross-section of three of the four Solonian property brackets. A particularly significant change was Ephialtes’ transference of *eisangelia*, the process whereby a public magistrate or functionary was tried for treasonous activity, to the Council and Assembly.²³ This innovation not only bestowed a large responsibility on the Demos, but was a move that was full of symbolic meaning. In any state it is the injured party that has the right to hear cases of treason. As long as the Areopagus received *eisangeliai*, it was tacitly assumed that the Areopagus was the offended party. Once the Council and Assembly began to receive *eisangeliai*, there went along with this change the powerful implication that the Council and Assembly were the sovereign institutions of the state, that the Demos was the State. Because of both this, as well as the other innovations orchestrated by Ephialtes, Plutarch’s words seem particularly apt, when he observed that the Ephialtean reforms rendered Athens an “undiluted democracy” (ἄκρατος δημοκρατία) (*Cim.* 15.2).

It is to the Athenians’ credit that these reforms did not result in civil war. That is not to say, though, that the Athenians were unanimous. On the contrary, these reforms caused serious resentment. When Cimon returned from Mt. Ithome, he attempted to block Ephialtes’ plans, but

²¹ Ibid. 197.

²² Rhodes 1992: 79.

²³ See Hignett 1958: 200; Rhodes 1985a: 144-207, 203-5; 1992: 67-75. Sealey 1981: 310-24 challenges the view that Ephialtes introduced an innovation and argues that he instead merely ratified a process that had been practiced since c. 488/7 (323-4). It is hard to agree with Sealey since that would require accepting a entirely new taxonomy of Athenian law (cf. 317-8).

having just been disgracefully dismissed by the Spartans, whom he had so ardently advocated helping, he not only failed in his attempt, but was himself ostracized.²⁴ Soon followed the assassination of Ephialtes. And when in 458 a large Spartan army was tarrying on the Boeotian-Attic border in the days leading up to the battle of Tanagra, one cause for their delay was the prospect of cooperation from an antidemocratic “fifth column” in Athens.²⁵ The “undiluted democracy” was far from universally popular.

Despite the opposition, the democratic reforms continued. Shortly after 462/1 pay of two obols was instituted for the citizen-jurors,²⁶ and pay for councilors and officials might go back to this time as well.²⁷ At any rate, once pay was instituted for jurors, it duly became a regular feature of the democracy. In 457/6 one Mnesitheides was the first man from the third property class (zeugitai) to be selected archon.²⁸ In 453/2 thirty deme justices (dikastai kata demous), a Pisistratid invention, were re-established to mitigate the workload of the dikasteries. These justices, Farrar suggests, offered litigants in the Attic countryside, in cases involving no more than ten drachmae, a hearing from a democratic official instead of an aristocratic arbitrator.²⁹ Thus, in the 450s the responsibilities and privileges of an Athenian citizen changed drastically. The idea of what it meant to be a citizen in Athens likewise changed. Whereas traditionally citizenship had various meanings relative to one’s social and economic status in the polis, now it was a more uniform idea. Political power was transcending social and economic divides, and political opportunity was becoming nearly coterminous and synonymous with citizenship. The best evidence for the great premium now placed on citizenship is the law of 451/0, usually

²⁴ Plu. *Cim.* 17.3. For the sequence of events, see Rhodes 1992: 69.

²⁵ Th. 1.107.4.

²⁶ Hignett 1952: 342-3; Rhodes 1992: 76.

²⁷ Hignett 1952: 219-221; Rhodes 1981: 13, 330; Ober 1989: 80.

²⁸ *Ath. Pol.* 27.2. Therefore the law must have been changed earlier, probably 458/7 (Rhodes 1992: 75).

²⁹ *Ath. Pol.* 26.3; Farrar 1988: 24.

ascribed to Pericles, which limited Athenian citizenship to the offspring of two Athenian parents.³⁰

This brief sketch of the years between 462/1 to 451/0 throws into relief the suddenness and pervasiveness of the democracy. True, Athens had been going in the direction of democracy for the past fifty years. Cleisthenes' tribal system made it possible for elections and other decisions to reflect a cross section of the voting population, and the change in the mode of archon-selection from direct election to sortition from an elected short list in 487/6 did much to weaken the hold of the traditional elite on the government. But the changes that were implemented in Athens during these eleven years amounted to a democratic revolution – a fact underscored by the appearance of the term *δημοκρατία* itself around this time.³¹ The changes redefined the city, and had serious social implications. The wealthy, the middling and the poor were put on an equal footing. The judicial process had been drastically altered in “an experiment of committing justice to the unlearned.” *Zeugitae* and *thetes* could sit on a jury that passed judgment on the legal disputes between citizens, even if they were *hippeis* and *pentekosiomedimnoi*. They could also sit on panels that vetted and examined officials, no matter what family or property bracket they belonged to. Now that the Assembly was in full control of state policy, the participation of the *zeugitae* in the probouleutic duties of the Council, and of both the *zeugitae* and the *thetes* in the debates and decisions on the Pnyx, increased the odds that state decisions would reflect new and more popular interests. And the college of officials in charge of carrying out some of those decisions could, and was, now occupied by *zeugitae*.³² The

³⁰ *Ath. Pol.* 26.4; *Plu. Per.* 37.3.

³¹ For the origin of the term *demokratia*, see Raaflaub 1995: 46-52, who argues for a date in the 460s. For a slightly earlier dating, see Hansen 1986a: 35-36. For the view that the word did not become respectable until after 403, see Sealey 1973.

³² This, by the way, is good evidence that the *zeugitae* and *thetes* made their presence felt in the Assembly right from the beginning. The inclusion of the *zeugitae* in the college of archons was the natural mechanism to insure that decisions made in the Assembly in the interests of the poorer classes would indeed be carried out.

government had been opened to the middling and poor classes, and pay was instituted to help make service to the state financially possible.

In other words, the aristocratic principle of self-rule had within a decade been extended to the poorer, non-aristocratic citizens. This political equality broke not only with Athenian custom, but with Greek tradition as a whole. For centuries political power had been the preserve of the well-born and wealthy. That was no longer the case. This break with traditional assumptions – social, ethical, intellectual and religious assumptions on the nature of man – certainly outraged many an aristocratically minded individual. Witness Ephialtes' murder and the malcontents who in part brought about the defeat of their fellow Athenians at Tanagra. But it must have made even the supporter of the reforms feel just as uneasy. The *zeugitae* and *thetes* suddenly had to assert themselves in an environment that took for granted their fundamental incapacity and innate inability.

In short, democracy was just as much a cultural revolution as a political one. It was making grand assumptions on the rights and ability of the ordinary citizen. If these assumptions were going to survive in a hostile environment, some proof that they were correct had to be offered. The challenges against them were too ingrained in the culture. It is therefore probable that a democratic political theory (or theories) was developed; and the fact that most democratic institutions were established between 462/1 and 451/0 suggests the 450s and 440s as the most fitting period for such activity (cf. section 7.2).

Many have in fact looked for a democratic political theory in this very period, and overwhelmingly they have focused their attention on the sophist Protagoras of Abdera, for several reasons. The acme of his life falls around 444 BC. He is also known to have been on close terms with Pericles, the major representative of the democracy. And Plato in both the

Protagoras and the *Theaetetus* discusses his doctrines against the background of democratic ideology. But the most compelling connection between Protagoras and the Athenian democracy is that in Plato's *Protagoras* Protagoras addresses what must have been *the* fundamental antidemocratic criticism. As the brief historical sketch above suggests, the weightiest objection the opponents of democracy might raise was: How can it be that men who have neither the natural ability nor the proper education to take part in the administration of the polis ought to be included in decision-making and leadership to such a high degree as the reforms of the late 460s and 450s mandate? Since Protagoras attempts to give an answer to so crucial a question, he has been the focal point for many discussions of a theoretical justification of democracy. By and large these discussions tend to pay particular attention to the so called "Great Speech" which Protagoras delivers in Plato's *Protagoras* (320c8-328d2).

1.3 SCHOLARSHIP: THE TWO APPROACHES EXPLAINED

However, the interpretations that scholars in the past one hundred years have offered as to how exactly Protagoras managed to place the Athenian democracy on a theoretical footing are characterized by significant differences. Be that as it may, while overlapping on several significant points, these interpretations can on the whole be divided into two groups: the educational and the philosophical. The former, having the greatest number of supporters, argues that Protagoras based his justification of democracy on the education offered both deliberately and environmentally by the Athenian polis. The latter, on the other hand, comprises interpretations which attempt to find a democratic political theory in the logical consequences of Protagoras' philosophy.

1.3.1 The Educational Approach

The educational approach, first of all, tends to dismiss the lengthy portion (i.e. the mythos) of the Great Speech where Zeus bestows Dike and Aidos (Justice and Shame) on humanity as a mythical symbol for the basic democratic tenet that all men have equal ability in politics (cf. subsections 3.1.1, 5.3.1). It accordingly pays greater attention to the passage (i.e. the logos) in which Protagoras describes the educational process current at Athens, and sees in it Protagoras' explanatory proof as to how this equal political ability (ἡ πολιτικὴ ἀρετή) is made possible. Protagoras asserts, these scholars contend, that by simply being raised in a democratic polis, the citizens learn the skills necessary in decision-making and office-holding. Democracy is thus an excellent form of government because it utilizes the intellectual resources of the entire citizenry. This approach is represented by Barker, Kagan, Guthrie, Finley, Kerferd, Müller and Schiappa.³³

Regarding Protagoras' philosophy, the educational group has generally interpreted his human-measure dictum (DK 80 B1) as an expression of objective relativism. The discrepant qualities perceived by different observers in a single object actually do coexist in the object. A consequence of objective relativism is the claim that Protagoras recognized things that were objectively beneficial to an organism, and thus made on this point, in the words of Kerferd, "an exception to his human-measure dictum."³⁴ This claim made possible the view that in political decision-making Protagoras recommended the calculus of utility. Whatever appears to a city to be right and honorable indeed is, but since the citizens will have different views on what is right

³³ Barker 1918: 152; Kagan 1965: 73-95; Guthrie 1971: 63-68; Finley 1973: 28, 94; Kerferd 1967: s.v. *Protagoras of Abdera* and 1981: 142-144; Müller 1986: 179-193; Schiappa 2003: 170.

³⁴ 1967: 91-3.

and honorable, the better view must be adopted, and “better” means that which is more advantageous.³⁵

The calculus of utility gave rise to different positions in the educational group regarding the leadership of the polis. On the one hand, J. S. Morrison put forward the view that Protagoras envisaged a “led democracy.”³⁶ According to this view, one man, such as Pericles, who knew what was best for the city, was to “guide, improve, and, presumably, implement the common purpose of the city.”³⁷ This view, as Morrison himself recognizes, is quite undemocratic.³⁸ It was therefore challenged, most recently by R. Müller, who argues that the role of leaders (note the plural) in the democracy is strictly advisory, and their aim “la conformité des normes juridiques avec ce qui est effectivement utile à la communauté.”³⁹

1.3.2 The Philosophical Approach

The philosophical group represents a variety of approaches which maintain that Protagoras justified democracy as a logical consequence of an epistemological and/or ontological position he held. Klaus Döring argues that the major consequence of the human-measure claim is that human morality and justice is predicated upon a contract.⁴⁰ Therefore, if any decision is going to be binding for the entire community, it must proceed from the collective opinion of the polis. “Nur als Kollektivmeinung, an deren Zustandekommen alle beteiligt waren, kann es für alle verbindlich sein.”⁴¹ Regarding the character of the decisions, he agrees with the educational group that utility was the criterion Protagoras used to resolve disagreement. He also agrees with

³⁵ Kerferd 1949: 25; Müller 1986: 185. This interpretation of “better” ultimately derives from Pl. *Tht.* 172a1-c1.

³⁶ 1941: 10-14, 16.

³⁷ Ibid. 11.

³⁸ Ibid. 12.

³⁹ 1986: 185. For an earlier, but less developed, challenge to Morrison’s “led democracy” see Kerferd 1981: 145.

⁴⁰ 1981: 111.

⁴¹ Ibid. 115.

them in interpreting the role of the politician as one who can discern the truly advantageous and recommend it successfully to the city. “[E]r versucht, die anderen von dem für sie Vorteilhafteren zu überzeugen.”⁴²

Ellen and Neal Wood make a similar argument. Protagoras, they maintain, taught that human custom-laws (νόμοι) are neither divinely inspired nor natural (i.e. transcendental), but have their origin in convention. Two consequences result from this premise. The first is held in common with the educational approach. Human morality is a cultural skill (τέχνη). Being a skill, it can be taught to all. Therefore, everybody has the ability to participate in government. The second is a new development. Since human custom-laws are of human origin, that must mean they are the result of the collective wisdom of the community. Therefore, discovering what is in the interests of the city requires the pooled intelligence of all the citizens.⁴³

This view implies there is an objective truth to be discovered, and so the Woods’ interpretation bears some resemblance to the view put forward by H. Gomperz back in 1912.⁴⁴ According to him, Protagoras taught that there is an objective truth, but that it is too complex to be comprehended to any appreciable degree by the individual. So, the individual only sees one facet of the truth and in this sense man is the measure of all things. All, however, are not equal measures. Education can change one’s disposition (i.e. can enhance his cognitive capacities) and make him able to see more of the truth.⁴⁵

1.3.2.1 Cynthia Farrar The fullest attempt to find a democratic political theory in Protagoras’ complete ontological and epistemological doctrines was undertaken by Cynthia

⁴² Ibid. 115.

⁴³ 1978: 128-136, 92. How exactly this conclusion follows from the human origin of custom-laws is not made clear.

⁴⁴ 1912: 269-278.

⁴⁵ 1912: 278. Curiously, Gomperz calls the disposition that sees more of the truth “normal” and the one that sees less of it “abnormal.” Guthrie implies that “normal” means “more consistent with the majority” (1971: 175), but Gomperz is clear on this point.

Farrar. She argues that the political changes of the 450s raised for the Athenians the problem of reconciling “the collective determination of policy with unity and harmony.”⁴⁶ Protagoras, she maintains, attempted to solve this problem. She first interprets Protagoras’ epistemological doctrine. Protagoras was neither a subjectivist nor a relativist.⁴⁷ Using the “On the gods” fragment (DK 80 B4) and the Didymus fragment,⁴⁸ she argues that what Protagoras taught was that an objective reality exists, but knowledge of it must be grounded in personal experience; if it is not, then men’s opinions about reality are defective.⁴⁹ Therefore, the human-measure dictum is not a statement of relativism – that is a Platonic construal. Instead, it merely asserts that opinions are worthless if not based on experience.

This interpretation allows Farrar to privilege both the ordinary citizen and the political expert. Although “man-measure sanctions the judgment of ordinary men and the collective, critical appraisal of human belief,”⁵⁰ still there is need for outstanding expertise. This superior expertise is not incompatible, *pace* Plato, who tries to argue in the *Protagoras* that it is, with mankind’s basic political competence.⁵¹ Instead, the two are part of the same process of discovering what is objectively beneficial to the city.⁵² This process Farrar reconstructs from the “Defense” of Protagoras in the *Theaetetus*, where Protagoras explains the sophist’s and politician’s function analogously to that of a doctor (*Tht.* 167b-c). Taking “better” in the passage to mean beneficial, she explains that what Protagoras means is that a doctor determines what is beneficial for the sick man by reference to his knowledge of what is normally beneficial for the healthy man. Then, instead of convincing the sick man that the treatment is beneficial, he

⁴⁶ 1988: 28. This perspective, I think, is basically flawed, since it assumes the average Athenian’s political competency – an assumption not likely to be granted by the enemies of democracy.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 49.

⁴⁸ For the fragment discovered in the commentary of Didymus the Blind on the *Psalms*, see Gronewald 1968.

⁴⁹ Farrar 1988: 51-53.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 76.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 86-87.

⁵² *Ibid.* 74-75.

changes the patient's condition so that the beneficial treatment will appear pleasant to him.

Similarly, the politician determines what is beneficial for his city on a basis of what is beneficial for all cities. Then, addressing the city, he argues that this or that policy normally has these beneficial or harmful results.⁵³ In making these arguments, he encourages the citizens "to think about their own advantage, or what will benefit the polis, in the way he thinks about it."⁵⁴ Thus both the doctor and the politician use the "critical standard of normality" to give health to their patients (where "normality" means "what is normally beneficial").

So far this interpretation appears able to justify monarchy (or even tyranny) and oligarchy just as well as democracy. It makes a case that the one who has the greatest intelligence deserves the leadership of the city. For Farrar, the democratic element enters the discussion when one remembers that all knowledge must be based on experience (which is the meaning, she contends, of the human-measure claim). The politician cannot assess what will be the most advantageous course of action for his city, unless he takes into consideration the people's own perceptions of what is advantageous. Their perceptions, or their "measurements," will help him tailor the normally expedient to the specific need his city has.⁵⁵ So, it is democratic inasmuch as the citizens' opinions ought to be polled or surveyed. But, as mentioned above, the politician's address is also instructive and formative. The people learn by his example how to ratiocinate their own interests, and so become better measures of their own needs.⁵⁶ Thus the human-measure dictum states a truth about man's actual nature and his ideal nature. Man is a measure and can become a better

⁵³ Notice the incongruity in the way Farrar interprets the doctor/sophist analogy at *Pl. Tht.* 167a5-6. Protagoras says the doctor uses medicines (φάρμακα) to effect the change, the sophist words/arguments (λόγοι). This analogy suggests that the "arguments" of the sophist work upon the hearer just as insensibly as medicine on a patient. Thus, the sophist's argumentation is almost subliminal. Farrar's interpretation, however, implies the sophist's arguments are very straightforward. Plato might very well refer to these "subliminal arguments" in his frequent allusion to the sophists' power to charm (κηλεῖν) (cp. *Prt.* 315a6-b8; *Menex.* 235b1).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 75.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 73.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 72. Cf. H. Gomperz' interpretation above, subsection 1.3.2.

measure of all things. And if this ideal is realized, the politician will have even more reason to survey the opinions of his constituents.

1.4 THE TWO APPROACHES EXAMINED

Both the educational and philosophical approaches highlight many important connections between Protagoras' philosophy and the Athenian democracy. However, each group suffers from several weaknesses.

1.4.1 The Educational Approach

To begin with the educational group, the view that Protagoras argued that the common man is taught basic political ability and morality in the environment of the polis and so *for that reason* has the moral and intellectual wherewithal to participate in political decision-making is liable to two objections. First, it jeopardizes Protagoras' own position as a professional teacher. As Socrates implies in both the *Protagoras* and *Theaetetus*, if everybody has political ability, what need is there of instruction? Kerferd tried to answer this question by pointing out that for Protagoras all have equal ability, but some have greater aptitudes.⁵⁷ It is these who have greater aptitudes that Protagoras teaches. But this explanation privileges one group as leaders. To preserve the democratic element (e.g. contra Morrison), these leaders are portrayed by Kerferd as strictly advisors. This view, though, is untenable. The fact that there are men qualified to lead, but content with an advisory role presupposes a democratic theory to which these leaders subscribe. But it is a democratic theory that this view is arguing. The question is therefore begged.

⁵⁷ 1953: 44.

Secondly, it does not necessitate democracy. Just because the people have a modicum of environmental education does not mean they ought, or have a right, or are able, to determine state policy. In other words, it is a *non sequitur* to say that because one's environment imparts political expertise to a degree, all *must* take part in decision-making. This point is well demonstrated by the fact that Peter Nicholson is able to see an argument for oligarchic decision-making in this same environmental education Protagoras describes. Since environment is a teacher, "[i]t follows that, within the decision-making body, it is reasonable to listen to every member since every member has acquired some measure of the political art and there are no real professionals."⁵⁸ It is reasonable, but not imperative. "This...is a general proposition applying to any decision-making body, in a democracy, an oligarchy, or any political system at all."⁵⁹

Moreover, the position the educational group takes on Protagoras' relativism involves their construal of his justification of democracy in an inconsistency. Kerferd and Müller, for instance, maintain that his relativism stopped short at considerations of what is beneficial.⁶⁰ Now, how can such a relativism square with Protagoras' defense of democracy on the basis of environmental education? Kerferd explains: "No one can teach another man the truth about what is just as all beliefs are equally true. What the sophist does is to teach men to abandon the belief that X is just, when such a belief is harmful, and to make them believe that Y is just, which it is to their advantage to believe."⁶¹ This view deprives environmental education of all meaning. The average Athenian's views concerning morality might be well and good, but concerning state policy they are useless, unless the politician instructs him on what is beneficial. But democracy was justified by the argument that the common man did not need any instruction, that the

⁵⁸ 1981: 19.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 19.

⁶⁰ Kerferd 1949: 25; Müller 1986: 185.

⁶¹ Ibid. 25.

education he received from his environment made him competent to contribute to state policy-making. Thus, a relativism that admits the calculus of utility leads this group to mutually exclusive conclusions: a self-sufficient citizen body and a citizen body that requires instruction.

In sum, the educational group fails to make clear Protagoras' justification of democracy because their construal of that justification a) privileges one group as leaders b) uses Protagoras' doctrine of environmental education as a guarantee of democracy's superiority and c) interprets his relativism in a way that undermines the value of that very environmental education.

1.4.2 The Philosophical Approach

The philosophical group has similar problems. In order to explain why decisions must proceed from the citizens, Döring argued that by the terms of the social contract any law that was to be binding on all had to be agreed upon by all. It cannot be taken for granted, though, that the Great Speech presents a social contract.⁶² And even if it could, that is no more an argument for democracy than any other form of government. The Hobbesian contract, for example, justifies monarchy. Moreover, his contention that Protagoras' description of environmental education signifies the renewal of the contract in every generation, for every individual, may be true (though that is not my opinion); but since Protagoras does not clarify the *substance* of the morality the citizens are agreeing to, one cannot be sure this would be a democratic contract.⁶³

Similarly, Farrar attempts to explain why decisions of a polis *must* issue from the whole community. As noted above, she denied Protagorean relativism and made the criterion for all state policy to be what is advantageous. This construal is, she argues, a defense of democracy,

⁶² 1981: 110-11. See Rosen 1994: 16-19 for the difficulty in seeing a social contract in the Great Speech.

⁶³ 1981: 111. "[der Erwerb der Bereitschaft, sich in die soziale Ordnung zu fügen] wiederholt sich im übrigen seither in jedem einzelnen Leben, denn: Was bedeutet der von Protagoras 325c5-326e5 eingehend beschriebene Erziehungsprozeß anderes als eben dies?"

because the sophisticatedly trained politician cannot properly assess the city's advantage, unless he surveys the opinions of the citizens. These opinions will probably be defective, at least at first; but as time goes on, the very procedure of debate and public deliberation, with the wise politicians presiding, will teach the citizens to be better assessors of their advantage. In this way, by Farrar's view, the citizens will become intelligent enough to deserve being consulted, and democracy will finally be vindicated.

This solution creates more problems than it attempts to answer. First, her denial that Protagoras was a relativist is unconvincing. She maintains that Protagoras' philosophy was merely an "agnosticism about the nature of the world" and that consequently the meaning of the human-measure dictum (DK 80 B1) is simply that all knowledge must be based on personal experience.⁶⁴ Consequently, she regards Plato's treatment of Protagoras in the *Theaetetus* as a distortion of his philosophy (which she denotes under the character "Protagoras") designed to show Protagoras guilty of inconsistency: While claiming that knowledge must be based on personal experience, he actually assumes "a form of knowledge independent of personal experience."⁶⁵ But this interpretation of Protagoras' philosophy is self-defeating. First, her interpretation of the human-measure sentence as claiming that knowledge must be based on personal experience is not an alternative to a position of relativism, but a necessary corollary of it. This point is made by Livio Rossetti. After showing that no real impasse results from Protagoras' privileging of every individual opinion, he remarks that "ce relativisme, reconnaissant la dignité des opinions qu'on ne partage pas, reconnaît surtout la dignité des jugements descriptifs et des opinions qui s'appuient sur des expériences personnelles directes et

⁶⁴ 1988: 49-77; for the quotation, see p. 50. As for agnosticism, Jørgen Mejer suggested this same thesis (1972:175-178), but was answered compellingly by Paul Woodruff (1982: 80-87, esp. 82). For her interpretation of the human-measure dictum, cf. the similar view of Versenyi 1962: 178-184.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 66.

immediates, etc.”⁶⁶ Farrar argues that he was not a relativist by arguing that he maintained that knowledge must be based on personal experience. But if Protagoras was a relativist, this is exactly one of the tenets one would expect him to maintain.

Her view that Plato distorts Protagoras’ philosophy in the *Theaetetus* is not in itself disconcerting, but according to her argument one must regard Plato as constructing a relativistic Protagoras (i.e. “Platagoras”) in order to refute the claim that knowledge must be founded on personal experience. This view has Plato make a mountain out of a molehill. In order to refute a simpler proposition, he foists upon Protagoras a more complicated proposition. In sum, Farrar’s attempt to deny Protagoras’ relativism has the opposite effect and suggests that his in fact was a relativist philosophy.

Besides the difficulty in her arguments against Protagoras’ relativism, another problem arises when she applies her interpretation of his philosophy to the political sphere. The fact that all knowledge must be grounded in experience obliges the politician to tailor his policies to the actual needs and interests of the city. He tailors them by consulting the people. Why can this only be done through public consultation and debate? Can he not arrive at an idea of the city’s needs by other means? And, if the people’s opinions may be defective, he has no reason to think that their opinions would provide any helpful information. But, she contends, the more he does so, the better their assessments will become.⁶⁷ This raises the final problem, one to which the educational group was also susceptible. A politician would not voluntarily choose to continue consulting the people, unless he were already dedicated to the democratic ideal. But how did that

⁶⁶ 1986: 201.

⁶⁷ On this point Ober’s (1996) criticism is instructive. He notes that Farrar assumes democracy is impossible without a “benevolent, historically minded elite” (128) and for this reason, as well as others, concludes her thesis to “fit into an elitist model of political behavior” (132). Ober is right to fault her thesis, for an elitist model simply cannot justify democratic thinking.

politician come to believe that democracy was the best form of government in the first place?
Again, we are back at square one.

1.5 THE APPROACH OF THIS DISSERTATION

The educational and philosophical approaches to Protagoras' justification of democracy have had an unequal reception in recent scholarship. While Farrar's view finds the occasional support,⁶⁸ the educational approach still holds the field. At least, Balot in his textbook on ancient Greek political theory follows this approach.⁶⁹ In the final analysis, though, the two approaches amount to "six of one, half a dozen of the other." They both incorporate in their interpretations a means of arriving at an objective truth, that objective truth being for most of them the beneficial (or advantageous).⁷⁰ Thus, by either rejecting Protagoras' relativism outright, as Gomperz and Farrar do, or by arguing (or assuming) that his relativism was only partial, as Guthrie, Kerferd and Müller do, they foist upon Protagoras the idea of utility (under the various labels of advantageous, beneficial or expedient). But this manoeuvre has two problems. First, none of these interpretations clarifies what utility ultimately means for Protagoras. Is it a Hobbesian law and national security, or a Lockian goal of life, liberty and property, or a Benthamite notion of the greatest good for the greatest number of people? Saying Protagoras incorporated the principle of utility into his political theory does not actually say very much. But while it might not say much, it does carry a crucial, non-democratic implication, which brings up the second problem. As long as any notion of utility provides the ultimate criterion for political decisions, there will

⁶⁸ E.g. Osborne 2010: 34n13, 98n39.

⁶⁹ 2006: 74-78. Cf. Raaflaub 1996: 142; Schiappa 2003: 176-189, esp. 184n49.

⁷⁰ Rossetti 1986: 198 offers *καίρως/τὸ πρέπον* as a criterion, but this differs little, practically speaking, from utility.

always be a way to privilege one group over another. And as long as one group is so privileged, democratic equality stands on a rickety foundation.

My argument therefore will be that Protagoras formulated a rationalization of the Athenian democracy that was entirely consistent with his theory relativism. First, in chapter two to six I will examine the evidence for Protagoras' thought as preserved in the Platonic corpus and in the fragments. Using this evidence, I will argue that Protagoras' relativism was the foundation for a theory of human knowledge, society and morality in which policy-making by genuine consensus was the only guarantee of correct action. Moreover, since democracy was the only form of government that endeavored to make policy by genuine consensus, democracy was therefore the best form of government.

Then, after analyzing evidence for Protagoras' life and concluding that he was in a position that encouraged him to theorize on the Athenian democracy (chapter 7), I will examine the funeral speech Thucydides gives to Pericles in his *History* and argue that Pericles describes the Athenian state, as well as the pursuits and character of the Athenians themselves, in language and concepts that derive from Protagoras' relativist rationalization of democracy (chapters 8 and 9). This expression of Protagorean theory in the person of Athens' democratic leader *par excellence* will serve as evidence that Protagoras' rationalization of democracy was not limited to philosophical discussions, but influenced actual, democratic practice.

At this point I will turn my attention to the rhetorical aspect of Protagoras' thought and offer a new interpretation of what Protagoras meant when he made the claim of being able to teach one how to make the weaker account the stronger. I will argue that this rhetorical claim should be seen as part of Protagoras' overall political theory and that it represents a mechanism by which Protagoras intended that genuine consensus so integral to his rationalization of

democracy to be realized (chapter 10). I will then examine the rhetorical aspect of Pericles' funeral speech and conclude that the speech shows Protagorean influence on the rhetorical level as well. Specifically, it attempts to execute the Protagorean technique of making the weaker account the stronger in an effort to render Athenian consensus regarding the war more secure (chapter 11).

Finally, in chapter twelve I will discuss why Thucydides incorporated this Protagorean element into both the content and the rhetoric of Pericles' funeral speech. Analyzing Thucydides' description of the plague that struck Athens shortly after the war began, I will attempt to show that it contains conceptual and verbal allusions to both Pericles' speech and Protagoras' relativism. On the basis of this comparison I will suggest that through these allusions Thucydides points to Protagoras' relativism as a crucial step in the eventual espousal of Realist politics by the Athenian democracy.

2.0 RELATIVISM AND DEMOCRACY

The section of the *Protagoras* that precedes the Great Speech (310a8-319a7) provides important information on the nature of Protagoras' teachings. Hippocrates, a young man, has recently heard that Protagoras is in town and now comes to Socrates who can give him an introduction to the sophist. But before taking him to Protagoras, Socrates questions Hippocrates in order to discover what his motives are in desiring Protagoras' instruction. A brief elenchus (311b1-313c3) soon reveals that the young man does not have a clue about the content of Protagoras' teaching, except that he can teach one to be an effective speaker. At this point Socrates indulges in a description of the sophists in which he complains that most people do not know what the sophists teach or if it is good or bad and even suggests that certain sophists themselves do not know if what they teach is good or bad (313c7-314b4).⁷¹ Thus the scene at Socrates' house raises three fundamental questions: 1) what Protagoras teaches, 2) whether it is good or bad, and 3) if Protagoras himself knows whether it is good or bad.

Regarding the question of what Protagoras teaches, a hint is given before the actual answer is presented. Having arrived at Callias' house, where Protagoras is staying, Socrates introduces Hippocrates to him and intimates that the two of them would like to know more about Protagoras' teaching. Aware that sophistic doctrine is suspect to many, Socrates offers to hold the conversation with Protagoras in private. Protagoras declines. While he is aware that his profession could get him into trouble, he thinks hiding it under any other name is not only

⁷¹ Cf. *Pl. Rep.* 493b7-c8, where this same ignorance makes the sophist an ἄτοπος παιδευτής.

useless, but would increase suspicion. He prefers therefore to be frank about his title. Besides, he says, he has devised other precautionary tactics to avoid getting into trouble because of the sophistic profession (317b6-c1). Although what these precautionary tactics (εὐλάβειαι) are he does not explain, the statement gives insight into the nature of Protagoras' teaching. It is novel, requires subterfuge and offends the sensibilities of the aristocratic elite (τοὺς δυναμένους ἐν ταῖς πόλεσι πράττειν) (317a3).⁷² Protagoras' commitments are more populist than aristocratic.⁷³

It is decided to have Protagoras answer Socrates in a make-shift discussion-room before all the guests and visitors at Callias' house. Here, asked what it is he will teach Hippocrates, Protagoras replies that his curriculum would be:

εὐβουλία περὶ τῶν οἰκείων, ὅπως ἂν ἄριστα τὴν αὐτοῦ οἰκίαν διοικοῖ, καὶ περὶ τῶν τῆς πόλεως, ὅπως τὰ τῆς πόλεως δυνατότατος ἂν εἴη καὶ πράττειν καὶ λέγειν (318e5-319a2).

Socrates asks if by this statement Protagoras means in short “political skill” (ἡ πολιτικὴ τέχνη). He does (319a6). But what do Protagoras and Socrates mean by ἡ πολιτικὴ τέχνη? As the conversation proceeds, it becomes clear that they have been using the phrase synonymously with virtue (ἀρετή).⁷⁴ Protagoras therefore promises to teach Hippocrates virtue. That is why earlier, when asked what it was he taught, Protagoras had given the vague reply that Hippocrates would return home everyday having been rendered “better” (βελτίονι) (318a6-9).

At this point Socrates appears to veer from his original purpose. His conversation with Hippocrates had given the impression that above all he wanted to discover what Protagoras taught, if it was good or bad and if Protagoras knew whether it was good or bad. But now, instead of asking Protagoras *how* he taught one to manage his estate and city in the best way – a

⁷² For οἱ δυνάμενοι (δυνατοί, δυνατότατοι) as a sociopolitical label indicating economic and/or political power, see Reverdin 1945: 209; Donlan 1980: 128.

⁷³ Similarly, at *Tht.* 161e4 Socrates, in implying Protagoras might be pandering, uses the verb δημόομαι. If Plato is indulging in word play, the pun would fall flat unless Protagoras indeed was δημοτικός.

⁷⁴ E.g. 320b5, 323a7-c1, 324b6. See also Taylor 1991: 71-72; 74-76.

question which would directly address that agenda – he expresses doubt that virtue is really teachable. He backs his claim with empirical evidence. The Athenian Assembly assumes virtue is innate. At least, when matters concerning trade-skills are discussed, they consult only those with demonstrated expertise in those trades, such as carpenters and shipwrights. When however matters involving city management are raised, they listen to anybody, whether he is wealthy or poor, noble or lowborn (319a8-d7). Moreover, if virtue were teachable, then those with unquestionable expertise would impart it to their sons. But they don't. They instead allow them to pick it up willy-nilly (320a2-3). Socrates' position is more rhetorical than logical. If it were logical, then it would represent a consistent view on virtue. True, Socrates contends that the skill is by nature. But if he means to suggest that the Athenians are right to consider everybody to have it by nature, then the sons of experts should be included in that number. However, Cleinias and Alcibiades have not learned it. Socrates' two objections thus rest on mutually exclusive assumptions.

His position therefore is rhetorical, and deliberately so. It is not a view on virtue that Socrates wants to get across. Rather, he means to elicit information from Protagoras. And the way he does so happens to reveal background information about Protagoras himself. On the whole, Socrates' objections suggest that two implications follow from Protagoras' premise that virtue is teachable. First, it means the Athenians are foolish to assume that everybody possesses it. In other words, Protagoras, Socrates ironically insinuates, is coming close to criticizing democracy! Secondly, if virtue were teachable, experts would succeed in imparting it. But they don't. Therefore, it is not teachable, and anybody who claims it is must be an impostor. Thus Protagoras is on the horns of a rhetorical dilemma. If he persists in maintaining that virtue is teachable, he invalidates Athenian democratic practice. On the other hand, if he changes his

position and offers an argument that virtue is somehow innate, he discredits his profession and calls his honesty into question.⁷⁵ Hippocrates thought Protagoras an expert rhetorician. The sophist's handling of this dilemma will show if he was right or not. But more importantly, this dilemma betrays crucial information on Protagoras' political commitments. Specifically, Plato assumes that Protagoras will not let democracy be invalidated by his view on virtue; otherwise, the dilemma he constructs through Socrates would be otiose. Protagoras could simply affirm that virtue is teachable and the Athenians wrong. But he doesn't; and the fact that he doesn't indicates that Protagoras, as far as Plato was concerned, was associated with the Athenian democratic ideology. Consequently, the three occasions when Protagoras asserts that his mythos has shown the Athenian government to be reasonable (323d6-323a4, 323c3-5, 324c3-d1), ought indeed to be read as an approval of democracy, not simply of any cooperative government.⁷⁶

Protagoras then has answered two of Socrates' three issues. He has said what it is he teaches and has given reason to believe that he believes his curriculum to be ethically good. He has not yet answered the third question, but since he will do so in the Great Speech, it is thus implied that the Great Speech is a demonstration of the way in which Protagoras accounts for the nature of the good and the bad. Thus, the section preceding the Great Speech creates the anticipation that main point of the speech will be a moral theory. Furthermore, in light of Socrates' rhetorical dilemma this section suggests that, whatever that moral theory is, it is somehow committed to democratic politics.

Plato, therefore, took it for granted that Protagoras' moral teachings went hand in hand with his political teachings, and that these political teachings were avowedly democratic. And since Protagoras' moral teachings have traditionally been described as relativism, the overall

⁷⁵ Cf. Morrison 1941: 7.

⁷⁶ For this view that Protagoras recommends simply cooperative, and not necessarily democratic, decision-making, see Nicholson 1980/1: 19.

impression from this opening section of the *Protagoras* is that Protagoras represented his relativism as one way or another compatible with Athenian-style democracy. Moreover, it is also implied that the following section, the so-called Great Speech, will explain that compatibility between relativism and democracy. In the following chapters (3 to 6) I will analyze the Great Speech and offer a reconstruction of this compatibility. However, before proceeding to do so, it is necessary to examine what is known from other sources about Protagoras' moral teachings, specifically his doctrine of relativism, and then to address the question of whether or not that relativism figures in the *Protagoras*, since it has been argued (see section 2.2) that the dialogue shows no trace of it. This argument, if it is true, presents a clear problem to an interpretation of the Great Speech as predicated upon a theory of relativism.

2.1 PROTAGOREAN RELATIVISM

Protagoras' philosophy has been interpreted in a variety of ways. In this section I examine several of these interpretations and conclude that his philosophy is best described as an epistemological, moral and aesthetic relativism that posited a pluralistic, multivalent thing-in-itself, while simultaneously maintaining an "agnostic" position towards the real essence of its substance. It is thus, as Kerferd calls it, an "objectivist" relativism.

2.1.1 The Human-Measure Claim

Protagoras' philosophy is typically summed up in the "human-measure" claim. Plato is the one who provides the earliest formulation of this claim. In the *Theaetetus* he quotes Protagoras from his work *Truth*:

φησὶ γάρ που πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἄνθρωπον εἶναι, τῶν μὲν ὄντων ὥς ἔστι, τῶν δὲ μὴ ὄντων ὥς οὐκ ἔστιν (152a2-4).⁷⁷

By this claim Plato explains Protagoras to mean:

ὥς οἷα μὲν ἕκαστα ἐμοὶ φαίνεται τοιαῦτα μὲν ἔστιν ἐμοί, οἷα δὲ σοί, τοιαῦτα δὲ αὖ σοί (152a6-8).

A similar explication recurs in the *Cratylus*:

ὥς ἄρα οἷα μὲν ἂν ἐμοὶ φαίνεται τὰ πράγματα [εἶναι], τοιαῦτα μὲν ἔστιν ἐμοί, οἷα δ' ἂν σοί, τοιαῦτα δὲ σοί (386a1-2).

The gloss Aristotle offers (along with some criticism) is:

ἐκεῖνος [sc. Protagoras] ἔφη πάντων εἶναι χρημάτων μέτρον ἄνθρωπον, οὐδὲν ἄλλο λέγων ἢ τὸ δοκοῦν ἐκάστῳ τοῦτο καὶ εἶναι παγίως· τούτου δὲ γιγνομένου τὸ αὐτὸ συμβαίνει καὶ εἶναι καὶ μὴ εἶναι, καὶ κακὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν εἶναι, καὶ τᾶλλα τὰ κατὰ τὰς ἀντικειμένας λεγόμενα φάσεις, διὰ τὸ πολλάκις τοισδὶ μὲν φαίνεσθαι τόδε εἶναι καλὸν τοισδὶ δὲ τοῦναντίον, μέτρον δ' εἶναι τὸ φαινόμενον ἐκάστῳ (*Metaph.* K 1062b13).

From these glosses some basic information can be gleaned about key ideas in Protagoras' claim. First, ἄνθρωπος is understood to signify the human individual, not the human species, as Aristotle's ἐκάστῳ and Plato's use of pronouns as examples attest.⁷⁸ Secondly, χρήματα denotes any and everything, as Plato's ἕκαστα and πράγματα and Aristotle's τόδε suggest. L. Versenyi suggests that there is special point in the word χρήματα in that, deriving from χρᾶσμαι (I use), it implies that things are what they are only in relation to the user.⁷⁹ Moreover, the fact that ὄντων and μὴ ὄντων modify it supports the idea that in χρήματα a very wide net is cast, since ὄντων embraces everything that is in existence and μὴ ὄντων everything that is deprived of existence. Furthermore, the negative μή adds an element of contingency, not only to the participle it

⁷⁷ Cf. Pl. *Cra.* 385e4-386a4. For the title of the work, see Pl. *Tht.* 161c4, *Cra.* 391c6, 386c2-4. Cf. also *Tht.* 171c5-7 where Socrates exploits the name of the work for the sake of a pun. The work apparently went under the alternate title οἱ Καταβάλλοντες (sc. Λόγοι) (Sext. *Adv. Math.* 7.60 [= DK 80 B1]). It might also have circulated under the title Μέγας Λόγος (DK 80 B3; Guthrie 1971: 264n2).

⁷⁸ Guthrie 1971: 188-189; McDowell 1973: 118; Mansfeld 1981: 43; Chappell 2005: 57.

⁷⁹ 1962: 182. But see Guthrie 1971: 190-191 who challenges this idea. Although Guthrie's list of the meanings of χρήμα does suggest that it was used without a writer's awareness of the etymology, it might make a difference to remember that Protagoras was a student of language and that the derivation is fairly obvious (see DK 80 A26-28).

negates, but by the law of symmetry to the first ὄντων as well.⁸⁰ It is not that a definite group of things are spoken of as not having being, but an unspecified group of things that may prove not to have being under a certain circumstance. Χρήματα then implies contingent existence and so is almost unlimited in its conceptual extent.

Although ἔστι and οὐκ ἔστι do not in the first instance signify existence, but, as Charles Kahn argues, have veridical force and denote what is and is not the case, they still amount to an assertion about existence. As Kahn again says: “If man is the measure of all things, ‘that they are so and are not so’, then he is the measure of the existence or non existence of atoms just as he is the measure of the being-cold or not-being cold of the wind.”⁸¹ This appears to be the point of Aristotle’s εἶναι παγίως: If that which seems to one is “with firm certainty,” then presumably it in a way actually exists for him.⁸² Thus, the veridical implies the existential meaning. In light of this meaning for ἔστι, it makes more sense to take ὡς as an equivalent for ὅτι than as one for ὅπως; otherwise, the idea of manner would be redundant.⁸³

This discussion of the vocabulary of the claim suggests the following translation:

The human individual is the measure of all things: if anything is a fact (the case), that it is the fact; if anything is not a fact, that it is not the fact.

Broadly speaking, Protagoras makes the claim that if anything is the case or is not the case, if anything is or is not, it is the individual that determines that it is so or is not so, that it is or is not. Thus, depending on what “determines” means, the claim could be interpreted in countless ways, from rationalistic humanism to broad empiricism to subjectivism. “Determines” here is an effort to render μέτρον. Plato and Aristotle are in agreement that by μέτρον some act

⁸⁰ Sextus *Adv. Math.* 7.60 (= DK 80 B1) has οὐκ ὄντων. How can the individual be the measure of a definite class of things that do not exist?

⁸¹ 1966: 250.

⁸² Vlastos 1956: xiii, n26a. On the whole, Aristotle appears to critique Protagoras’s dictum as though it were a subjectivist claim (cf. Burnyeat 1976a: 44, 46 & below, subsection 2.1.2).

⁸³ Cf. Guthrie 1971: 189-190; Schiappa 2003: 120-121.

of assessment is signified, the former restating its idea with φαίνεται, the latter with δοκεῖ.

However, they are both impersonal verbs, an idea which suggests a degree of passivity on the part of the individual. This suggests that rationalism is no longer an option, since the impression is that the individual does not actively apply his mental powers to the data, but rather that he reacts and responds to them, if not altogether passively, then at least cooperatively. At the same time, the fact that ἄνθρωπος is the individual makes the claim for humanism weak.

Alternatively, taking μέτρον to refer, not exclusively to the human individual, but to any percipient at all, creates an opportunity to interpret the claim as an empiricist statement. So Versenyi concludes that “the μέτρον of any χρῆμα is neither man as the individual, nor men collectively, nor man in general, but simply whatever organism...is in the relation to it which determines it (its essence and existence) *qua* χρῆμα.”⁸⁴ The point of Protagoras’ claim is then “to remind man that he is not an abstract-theoretical chimera...but a living human being, to point out that it is this world of χρήματα within which he lives, that ultimately concerns him, and thus to recall him from the world of Parmenides etc.”⁸⁵ Similarly, Cynthia Farrar analyzes Protagoras’ statement on the gods (DK 80 B4), his refutation of geometers (DK 80 B7), and the fragment discovered in Didymus the Blind’s commentary to the *Psalms*,⁸⁶ and claims that “the Sophist opposed theories or approaches to understanding not grounded in personal experience.”⁸⁷ One problem with this approach is of course that it stretches the meaning of ἄνθρωπος. At any rate, arguing that Protagoras was an empiricist does not mean he was not a relativist as well. The

⁸⁴ 1962: 183.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 183-184.

⁸⁶ Gronewald 1968 first published this papyrus fragment, found in Egypt during World War II (Mansfeld 1981: 51n43). It reads: φαίνομαι σοὶ τῷ παρόντι καθήμενος· τῷ δὲ ἀπόντι οὐ φαίνομαι καθήμενος· ἄδηλον εἰ κάθημαι ἢ οὐ κάθημαι. For discussions, see Mejer 1976: 306-311; Mansfeld 1981: 51-52; Woodruff 1984: 80-87.

⁸⁷ 1988: 50.

former is a position on what data qualifies as such; the latter is interpretation of the veracity of that data. The two positions are not mutually exclusive.⁸⁸

Again, taking μέτρον to signify an act of determining without any further qualification suggests Protagoras' claim is subjectivist. There is a rather long history of this approach, beginning with Aristotle (*Metaph.* Γ 1007b18, K 1062b13; cf. Θ 1047a)⁸⁹ and continuing on to Sextus Empiricus (*Adv. Math.* 7.389-390).⁹⁰ Read as a subjectivist claim, it will then assert that any perception and judgment is true absolutely, not just for the percipient, but for the fellows of the percipient, at least as far as the original percipient is concerned. A result of this claim is, as Aristotle's gloss points out, a violation of the law of contradiction. If two different percipients perceive the same object in opposite ways, then that object is in a real sense at one and the same time and place X and not-X. However, there appears to be provision against this fallacy in Protagoras' dictum. If the μέτρον is the human individual, then his assessment of any one thing cannot have any value for any individual other than himself; if it did, then for that second individual the human-measure claim would no longer be applicable, since a second party would for him, the original percipient, be a measure of all things whose measurement would modify his reality. It is thus difficult to interpret Protagoras' dictum as a subjectivist claim without nullifying at once that claim.

The two glosses Plato gives of Protagoras' claim add the important qualifiers ἐμοί and σοί so that, when the individual determines something to be the case, he determines it to be the case *for him alone*. Thus Plato interprets Protagoras' dictum to be a claim amounting to relativism. Whatever the individual perceives to be the case, such is the case for that individual. The immediate illustration Plato gives in the *Theaetetus* uses wind as an example. If the same

⁸⁸ Cf. Mansfeld 1981: 51-53.

⁸⁹ Cf. Burnyeat 1976a: 46; Chappell 1995: 334.

⁹⁰ Cf. Burnyeat 1976b: 172.

wind appears to one person to be cool, to another cold, to another warm and to yet another positively hot, Protagoras' dictum constrains us to say that the wind is in fact cool only to the one who feels it to be cool, cold only to the one who feels it to be cold, and so forth (152b).

This interpretation of the statement as a relativist claim is, I suggest, preferable to the other alternatives. For one reason, it has a strong presence in the doxographic tradition, being found, side by side with the subjectivist, in Sextus *Adv. Math.* 7.60 and at *Pyrrh. Hyp.* 1.216, and in Cicero's *Academica* (2.142).⁹¹ But more importantly, it captures the passivity of the individual's assessment which Plato and Aristotle render through impersonal verbs; it asserts the importance of empirical knowledge without stopping short at a broadly empiricist claim; it avoids the self-contradiction that the subjectivist construal incurred; and, finally, it is recommended by the uniformity of the Platonic testimony. Plato depicts Protagoras as a relativist not only in the *Cratylus* passage and, more importantly, in the *Theaetetus*, but does so in the *Protagoras* as well, as I will attempt to show below (section 2.3).

2.1.2 What Kind of Relativism?

Accepting Plato's characterization of Protagoras' philosophy as relativism, one is immediately confronted with a number of issues. First is the nature of the individual's assessment, or measurement. Plato's wind-example concerned only perceptions. However, in his overall treatment of Protagoras in the *Theaetetus* Plato takes it as a foregone conclusion that Protagoras applied his doctrine to judgments as well. These include judgments, not just on physical attributes, but on knowledge claims (178b9-179b9: i.e. on future likelihood) and moral values (166a2-168c1) as well. Thus, the human individual is the measure of all that is true and false, right and wrong, good and bad, beautiful and ugly, honorable and shameful. Although this

⁹¹...id cuique verum esse quod cuique videatur.

extension of perception to judgment has been challenged as un-Protagorean,⁹² it does not appear to be a foul. The inclusion of both sense-impressions as well as cognitive judgments in the doctrine is assumed in Protagoras' assertion that one cannot think what is not nor anything except what he experiences (*Tht.* 167a8-9). Since his thinking involves cognitive judgments about reality, those judgments cannot be excluded from the human-measure. Moreover, it is not at all clear that Protagoras regards perception and judgment as fundamentally different. Thinking, like feeling, is a mode of perception.⁹³ Protagoras' relativism thus embraced the sensory, epistemic and moral fields.

The second issue concerns Protagoras' ontology and can be divided into two parts. The first part addresses the thing, the *χρῆμα*. Specifically, does it or does it not exist independently of the perceiver? A. E. Taylor offered the suggestion that it does not; rather, each individual lives in a private world that is real only for him.⁹⁴ If honey is sweet to me, but bitter to you, it is because there are two honeys, real but independent of each other. This view seems unlikely. One reason is given by Kerferd who notes that in the *Theaetetus* the wind, for example, is always assumed to be the same wind (cf. 152b). However, Kerferd's argument might seem compromised in coming from Plato and so one should look at comments outside Plato. In general, these comments on what Protagoras' measurement means suggest that it is always a question of what a thing's identity is, not whether or not there is a shared substance, or thing. For example, Plutarch summarizes Protagoras' theory with the phrase "each of the things are not more this way than

⁹² Maguire 1973: *passim*, his main argument being that in the *Theaetetus* Plato in several passages uniformly progresses in his interpretation of Protagoras' claim from φαίνεται to δοξάζει to δοκεῖ and that this repeated pattern should arouse suspicion (115-119). However, Plato in the *Cratylus*, where Protagoras' theory is treated only in passing, moves straight and quickly from φαίνεται (386a1) to δοκεῖ (386c3).

⁹³ Cf. Mansfeld 1981: 44n19 & (emphatically) 50: "[I]t can never be said enough that Protagoras does *not* (his italics) distinguish between thinking and sensing."

⁹⁴ 1937: 326.

that” (τῶν πραγμάτων ἕκαστον εἰπὼν οὐ μᾶλλον τοῖον ἢ τοῖον).⁹⁵ The interesting point about this fragment is that Plutarch’s adversary, Colotes, had attributed the line to Democritus. When therefore Plutarch corrects him and says it was Protagoras who said it, the impression is that it reflects Protagoras’ actual words. Moreover, if DK 68 B69 is indeed a contradiction by Democritus of Protagoras, it implies the same point. It reads: ἀνθρώποις πᾶσι τὸν αἰσθόμενον καὶ ἀληθές· ἡδὺ δὲ ἄλλω ἄλλο.⁹⁶ What is at issue in these two, perhaps near contemporary, fragments is whether or not the identity of the thing, not its substance, is shared.

If there is then a shared reality involving shared matter, do the attributes of those things, which differ according to the perceiver, inhere in the thing itself or are they created by the act of perceiving? This is the second part of the ontological question. To continue Plato’s example, does Protagoras consider the wind to contain coldness, warmth and heat? If so, then the wind is an amalgam of qualities, each quality divided along a spectrum of various intensities, and the individual perceives the quality to which his disposition inclines him, but can never perceive or conceptually embrace the whole thing. Or, does he consider the wind to be bereft of all these attributes which accordingly only “come to be as they are perceived, and for the percipient?”⁹⁷ The question is thus between a type of ontological subjectivism and an “objectivist” relativism.⁹⁸ Kerferd supported the objectivist interpretation and brought a weighty argument to the discussion. He points out that Aristotle always dismisses Protagoras’ claim on the grounds that it violates the law of contradiction. If Protagoras meant that attributes come to be as they are perceived, then the attribute would only exist in a percipient-perceived continuum, not in the wind itself, so that this view would never become liable to the law of contradiction. If, however,

⁹⁵ DK 68 B156 = *Against Colotes* 1108ff.

⁹⁶ For other Democritean differences with Protagoras, see DK 68 A113, B111 (cf. DK 80 B7), B69.

⁹⁷ Guthrie 1971:186, 267.

⁹⁸ Cf. Schiappa 2003: 129-130.

Protagoras maintained that the attributes did inhere in the thing itself, then it *could* be taken by some as liable to the law.⁹⁹ Thus the objectivist position explains Protagorean relativism in such a way as to account for the way the subjectivist interpretation of his claim could have emerged.

Another idea that recommends the objectivist interpretation is that it accommodates Protagoras' agnosticism better. About the gods Protagoras is supposed to have declared:

περὶ μὲν θεῶν οὐκ ἔχω εἰδέναι, οὔθ' ὥς εἰσὶν οὔθ' ὥς οὐκ εἰσὶν οὔθ' ὅποιοί τινες ἰδέαν·
πολλὰ γὰρ τὰ κωλύοντα εἰδέναι ἢ τ' ἀδηλότης καὶ βραχύς ὢν ὁ βίος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (DK 80 B4).¹⁰⁰

The point to notice is that Protagoras indicates that *given enough time* he might very well gain knowledge of divine beings. If Protagoras' relativism posited that attributes came to be as they are perceived, then the thing in itself, as it *really* is, is unknowable. Given all the time in the world, one would still only be able to say that he knows only what he perceives, not the thing perceived. Protagoras, however, is ready to say that, hypothetically speaking, he might very well someday come to a knowledge of gods, that time might overcome the matter's inherent obscurity. Thus, in the objectivist interpretation there is a built-in metaphysical suspension of opinion at the ontological level that squares better with Protagoras' agnosticism.¹⁰¹

It has been alleged that such an objectivist relativism is really no relativism at all, because it posits an objective reality.¹⁰² But that objection assumes a simplistic notion of Protagoras' objective reality. Protagoras posits, not a uniform, univocal objective reality, but one in which a plurality of attributes was in all things,¹⁰³ so that whatever is said of an object is true. This is why Protagoras could claim that everything is true (ἔλεγε...πάντ' εἶναι ἀληθῆ)¹⁰⁴ and that it is

⁹⁹ 1949: 21; 1981: 86-87; cf. Schiappa 2003: 130.

¹⁰⁰ = D. L. 9.51. Similarly, at Pl. *Tht.* 162d he says he does not talk or write about gods ὥς εἰσὶν ἢ ὥς οὐκ εἰσὶν.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Mejer 1976: 309: "Thus the philosophical position of Protagoras will be agnosticism rather than phenomenalism, solipsism etc."

¹⁰² So Bett 1989: 167.

¹⁰³ He is said to have argued against those who represented reality as one (DK 80 B2).

¹⁰⁴ D. L. 9. 51 (= DK 80 A1).

impossible to contradiction (οὐκ ἔστιν ἀντιλέγειν), since when two people make mutually exclusive statements, they are talking about their two, distinct experiences towards the same thing.¹⁰⁵ This last claim appears to be inconsistent with Protagoras' claim that there are two opposing accounts concerning everything (δύο λόγους εἶναι περὶ παντὸς πράγματος ἀντικειμένους ἀλλήλοις) (DK 80 B6a), but Kerferd again offers a good explanation: Protagoras maintained that contradiction at the verbal level was possible, but not at the level of the things themselves.¹⁰⁶ A thing has a plurality of attributes; each individual's assessment of it is veridical and incorrigible; the plurality of assessments on any given thing can always be summed up in two positions, X and not-X. These contradict each other at the verbal level (and at the level of social interaction), but, Protagoras could say, not on the real level, because the two statements are about two different attributes in the one thing. Thus, Protagoras' objective, but pluralistic, reality still can only be assessed in its relation to the percipient individual. His ontology might have approached agnosticism at a metaphysical level, but epistemically it was pluralistic, while the essence of that pluralistic reality was what it was relative to the individual. Denying it to be relativism because it is not something like phenomenalism is just a case of *ignoratio elenchi*.

An important question concerning Protagoras' pluralistic ontology is what attributes were considered attributes? Kerferd and Müller argue that Protagoras did not consider the beneficiality or advantageousness of a thing to be an attribute relative to the individual perceive/judger.¹⁰⁷ In doing so they (consciously) admit a major inconsistency to his thought. It is not simply that one group of attributes is relativized, while one attribute is not (as inconsistent as that is). But on this view Protagoras proves self-refuting. On the one hand, he would claim that the person who perceives a coolness in his soup is perceiving a quality that is, for him, really in the soup. On the

¹⁰⁵ Kerferd 1981: 90. But Mansfeld 1981: 48 doubts this claim belongs to Protagoras.

¹⁰⁶ 1981: 91-92.

¹⁰⁷ Kerferd 1949: 25; Müller 1986: 185.

other, should this person continue eating his soup and receive third degree burns because the soup was *really* hot, it was to his advantage to stop eating, but he continued because he trusted his “secondary” judgment. Thus, allowing considerations of advantage and benefit to be absolute would have vitiated Protagoras’ entire project. In chapter six (section 6.3) I will suggest that Protagoras did theoretically argue that the beneficial and advantageous were attributes relative to the individual just as much as physical, moral and aesthetic qualities. His purpose in doing so was not just for the sake of consistency, but to eliminate the beneficial and advantageous as a standard in human decision-making and behavior, especially at the polis level.

2.1.3 The “polis-measure”: Synopsis of the “Great Speech”

Protagoras did not limit his relativism to the individual, but extended it to the polis as well, as though the polis were a single, percipient entity and not a collection of potentially discrepant assessments of reality. At *Tht.* 167c4-5 he affirms:

[φημι] ἐπεὶ οἷά γ’ ἂν ἐκάστη πόλει δίκαια καὶ καλὰ δοκῇ, ταῦτα καὶ εἶναι αὐτῇ, ἕως ἂν αὐτὰ νομίζῃ.

As Burnyeat observes, Protagoras’ application of relativism to the city is directly parallel to that of the individual.¹⁰⁸ It is surprising that Protagoras makes this extension, since what is just and honorable to the city will more times than not disagree with what the individual, living in that city, holds to be just and honorable to himself, not to mention advantageous. Thus to explain the “polis-measure” claim is in essence to explain Protagoras’ political theory.

On the whole, there appear to be two ways to resolve this problem. Either Protagoras holds the perception and judgment of the city to be more authoritative than the individual’s or holds the two to be (potentially) synonymous. It is difficult to see how he could hold the city’s

¹⁰⁸ Burnyeat: 1990: 23 & n31.

judgments to be more authoritative than the individual's without introducing a major modification to his human-measure claim, a modification that would in effect nullify it. I suggest therefore that he regarded the two as synonymous; or, more specifically, that he regarded the polis' assessment of reality to be an amplification of the individual's assessment of reality.

How he does so he makes clear in the "Great Speech" given to him by Plato in the *Protagoras* (320c8-328d2). In general, I suggest that Protagoras was able to regard the two as synonymous because he defined the human individual as an historical construct.¹⁰⁹ This historical and anthropological perspective is intimately linked with Protagoras' relativism. The individual *in vacuo* is veridical and incorrigible. But as a percipient being in history, his nature changes somewhat. While his perceptions and judgments are still incorrigible, they are automatically pre-conditioned by the history of his community and, moreover, actively conditioned by the education he receives from his environment. This conditioning creates a prejudice in the individual's assessment of reality and a proclivity always to have perceptions and judgments that are consistent with his community's perceptions and judgments, as defined by its history.¹¹⁰ This prejudice thus sustains a pattern of uniformity regarding both the nature of the physical world and moral values.¹¹¹ True, whatever appears to be the case for one, is the case for him as long as he believes it is, and whatever the perceptions the individual has or the judgments he forms, they are incorrigible. This is of course the core of Protagoras' relativism. However, the history of his community predisposes him towards certain perceptions and judgments, that is, towards a certain worldview. As long as he is a product of this community, he

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Mansfeld 1981: 46: "What I wish to argue is that Protagoras meant 'man' in the sense of a person with a past and, presumably, a future."

¹¹⁰ Cf. Vlastos 1956: xix-xx: "Protagoras, if he had time, might have enlarged the list of preventive measures and told us more of the lyre-master's way of charming the mind into conformity – the temples and statues, religious festivals and processions, speeches on state occasions, tragedy and comedy on the public stage, functions, so lavishly supported by the Periclean splendor-state, through which a civilized community keeps its hold on the heart and imagination of the citizen, ensuring that he will love what the city loves and hate what it hates."

¹¹¹ Cf. Mansfeld 1981: 47-48.

will hold this worldview, and hold it sincerely; as long as he holds it sincerely, his capacity of having substantively different perceptions or forming substantively different judgments is severely limited. But, while it is limited, it is not entirely removed. He is still an individual with an individual natural endowment by virtue of which he will have perceptions and form judgments which may or may not conform to the community pattern. If they do, then by the standards of the community he is “well-born” (εὖφύης); if not, then by those same standards he is not (ἀφύης).¹¹² Again, these are relative standards; it is the vocabulary that is constructed on the assumption of absolute values.

It is this anthropological characterization of the human individual that enables Protagoras to use his theory of relativism as the basis of a political theory. Specifically, it allows him to make the transition from a *descriptive* philosophy to a *normative* philosophy. He ventures to show that civilization happened precisely because the human individuals were independent assessors of reality and indeed would never have happened unless they were allowed to be so. This being the case, the first communities emerged on a democratic basis: The content of the first communities’ worldview was what the first individuals *genuinely* believed in and *genuinely* agreed on. This original democracy, although it does not constitute a moral mandate to establish popular government or to base government on the principle of advantage in the interests of self-preservation and prosperity, *does* constitute a recommendation for democracy. If civilization happened on democratic principles, then to perpetuate democracy would only be to bow to the *natura rerum*. Since this *natura rerum* is so multivalent as to be unknowable in its totality – like knowledge of the gods, it is darkened by the obscurity of the matter itself and the brevity of human life¹¹³ – this recommendation for democracy perhaps cannot be called natural. But if not,

¹¹² Cf. Pl. *Prt.* 327b7-c1 and DK 80 B3.

¹¹³ Cf. DK 80 B4.

it can at least be called biological and instinctual. At any rate, it suggests that democracy is consistent with human φύσις, a suggestion that easily lends itself to idealistic celebrations and representations of democracy.

Thus, relativism, mediated through an anthropological definition of humankind, serves as the basis of Protagoras' rationalization of democracy; namely, by using an historical and anthropological perspective he developed a rationalization of democracy on the basis of his theory of epistemological and moral relativism. In chapter three I will analyze the mythos section of the Great Speech and argue that it sets the interpretive tone, so to speak, for the rest of the mythos by suggesting an evolutionary model of biological development. Behind the mythical trappings of gods and an absent-minded Titan a process of natural selection resembling the thought of Protagoras' contemporary Empedocles is taking place.

In chapter four I continue my examination of the mythos. Analyzing Protagoras' nuanced description of the first humans, I argue that their naturally developed intelligence and the almost complete autarky that resulted therefrom precluded their coming together in society by their own powers. I then apply the Empedoclean evolutionary model suggested in chapter three and argue that the mythos does not represent the establishment of *all* human society, but mythically dramatizes the process whereby *various* communities gradually emerged as a result of a "social" natural selection that combined likeminded individuals with other likeminded individuals according to a genuine consensus and shared *Weltanschauung*.

In chapter five I examine the second section of the Great Speech, the logos. I argue that the picture of societal education it presents is not meant as an explanation as to how democratic citizens acquire political skill (or virtue) in the first place, as it has often been interpreted in the past (see subsection 1.4.1). Rather, I suggest that Protagoras meant it as an explanation as to how

the content of the community's original worldview is passed on and perpetuated through successive generations. The indirect education of parents and elders, as well as the direct education of teachers, and finally the civil education imparted by the laws of the community (which are the assessments of the citizens in the form of vettings and examinations), predispose the members of the community to the perspective of the "founding fathers."

This picture of education and conformity gives the impression that Protagoras thought of the Greek polis, especially the democratic polis, as a static entity which, if he did, he would have been wide of the mark. Accordingly, in chapter six I discuss how Protagoras conceptualized the role of the politician in the democratic state. Using the "Defense" of Protagoras found in Plato's *Theaetetus*, I suggest an interpretation that sees the democratic leader as one who because of an outlook that is in natural alignment with the city's worldview (εὐθυμία) and because of an education that increases that alignment,¹¹⁴ is in a position to act as guarantor of the city's opinion by recommending the course of action most consistent with the city's worldview. Thus, though he is wiser, the content of his opinion is not any truer than anybody else's.¹¹⁵

In this way then I will attempt to show that Protagorean relativism, coupled with an anthropological interpretation of human nature, justified the novel practices represented by the Athenian democracy in the mid-fifth century. In chapters seven to twelve I will discuss the likelihood of an actual incorporation of Protagoras' justification into the Athenian democratic culture (see subsection 1.5 for a summary of these chapters). For now, because I maintain that Protagoras' relativism lies at the heart of the Great Speech in the *Protagoras*, it is important to discuss the extent to which his relativism occurs, if at all, in that dialogue.

¹¹⁴ Cf. DK 80 B3.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Protagoras in the *Theaetetus*: καὶ οὕτω σοφώτεροί τε εἰσιν ἕτεροι ἐτέρων καὶ οὐδεὶς ψευδῆ δοξάζει, καὶ σοί, ἔάντε βούλῃ ἔάντε μὴ, ἀνεκτέον ὄντι μέτρω· σώζεται γὰρ ἐν τούτοις ὁ λόγος οὗτος (167d2-4).

2.2 RELATIVISM AND THE *PROTAGORAS*

The interpretation of the Great Speech on the basis of Protagoras' human-measure claim so as to amount to an explanation of the polis-measure claim is challenged by the apparent absence of any reference to relativism in the rest of the *Protagoras*. If the mythos and logos of the Great Speech are conceptually predicated upon a relativism that denies absolute value to ethical "goods" and "bads," then the discussions that follow the speech, being primarily ethical discussions, ought *a priori* to broach the status of "goods" and "bads." In this section I will argue that the *Protagoras* does treat Protagoras' relativism, but the treatment is obscured by the fact that Plato pays greater attention to the dramatic dénouement of the dialogue than to the conceptual refutation of relativism (which he reserves for the *Theaetetus*).

Several scholars have argued that the *Protagoras* does broach the subject of relativism in at least two passages. The first occurs when Socrates, in the course of arguing that δικαιοσύνη and σωφροσύνη are both forms of σοφία, asks Protagoras if he considers the good to be beneficial, whereupon Protagoras launches into a demonstration that what is beneficial is of incredible variety (333d8-334c6). A. E. Taylor took the passage to be "a direct and simple application of Protagoras' own principle of 'man the measure' to ethics, etc."¹¹⁶ Gregory Vlastos later agreed.¹¹⁷ This interpretation was challenged by Moser and Kustas on the grounds that Protagoras actually accepts the beneficial as a standard,¹¹⁸ and by C. C. W. Taylor, who considered the identification of this passage with the human-measure claim to be "sheer confusion."¹¹⁹ The latter is certainly right. Protagoras does nothing more in this passage than

¹¹⁶ Taylor 1937: 251. This interpretation ultimately derives, via Adam & Adam (1893: 138) from Zeller 1892: 177-178.

¹¹⁷ 1956: xvi n32.

¹¹⁸ 1996: 114.

¹¹⁹ 1991: 134.

expatiate on the variety of what is beneficial. He says some things are beneficial to cows, some to dogs. Again, olive oil is bad for animal fur, but beneficial to human hair. This is not moral relativism. On the other hand, one cannot take this passage, as Moser and Kustas do, as Protagoras' acceptance of "a standard that can be applied in reaching moral agreement, namely, the profitable."¹²⁰ Protagoras merely makes the argument that what is beneficial is extremely varied. What end he thinks this argument serves, he simply does not say. Nor does he get a chance to do so, as Socrates diverts the conversation with a complaint on procedure (334c8ff). It has been suggested that Protagoras was attempting to create an occasion for discussing his human-measure doctrine, but was forestalled by Socrates.¹²¹ Considering the excitement Protagoras elicits from the sophistic audience with these words (ἀνεθορύβησαν) (334c7), this reading does not seem implausible.

The other passage where Protagoras' relativism comes into play occurs towards the end of the dialogue. Socrates has been attempting to convince the majority of people that pleasure is the good and pain the bad; that, since this is the case, and since nobody wittingly errs, good living involves the accurate and objective measurement of goods and bads (356d3-e4). The idea of an objective knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) that shows people what is right and wrong, as well as the verbal identification of that knowledge as an art of measurement (μετρητική), has led most scholars to acknowledge that this amounts to a reference at least to Protagoras' relativism.¹²²

In short, the presence of relativism in the *Protagoras* is a generally acknowledged. However, in the final analysis it is merely acknowledged that it is present *in reference*, not in

¹²⁰ 1966: 114.

¹²¹ Mansfeld 1981: 44, who also draws attention to a possible playful allusion to the human-measure claim when Protagoras asks Socrates, who has complained about the length of his speech (although that particular "speech" had not been all that long), Πότερα οὖν ὅσα ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ δεῖν ἀποκρίνεσθαι, τοσαῦτά σοι ἀποκρίνωμαι, ἢ ὅσα σοί;

¹²² Vlastos 1956: xviii; Taylor 1991: 191; Denyer 2008: 192. Moser and Kustas 1966: 113 once again disagree on the grounds that Protagoras freely grants this conclusion to Socrates, which he would not do, if relativism were at stake. However, Protagoras does not make the concession *in propria persona*. He agrees that the *majority* would admit that Socrates is right (356e2-4).

discussion. It just hangs there, bearing no integral relation to the dialogue. The result is not flattering to Socrates. Since he and Protagoras have not been discussing the latter's doctrine of relativism, when Socrates concludes in a quick reference that it cannot be right, he would essentially appear to be sucker punching his opponent, who moreover does not cry foul. Therefore, if it can be shown that the dialogue does in fact discuss Protagoras' relativism in a meaningful, though indirect, way, as I propose to do, not only will the presence of relativism in the mythos appear more compelling, but the dialogue as a whole will seem more understandable.

2.3 RELATIVISM IN THE *PROTAGORAS*

The line of argumentation that the *Protagoras* follows indicates that Protagoras' relativism, though never expressly brought up, casts a long shadow over the dialogue. Specifically, it implies that Protagoras' equation of truth with human opinion is a claim that spells its own ruin. Socrates' strategy is therefore an implicit *peritropē* ("turning the tables") and as such anticipates the explicit *peritropē* of the *Theaetetus* (170e7-171c7).

2.3.1 εὐβουλία

The first indication that Protagoras' Great Speech did indeed imply a relativistic interpretation of human development is provided by Socrates' response to it. Upon recovering from the charm of Protagoras' words, he proceeds to offer four proofs that the individual virtues (δικαιοσύνη, ὁσιότης, σωφροσύνη, ἀνδρεία) are not disparate, discreet notions, but parts of a whole, namely σοφία.

The significance of Socrates' position is lost on Protagoras. At any rate, he is indifferent about agreeing or disagreeing with Socrates on this point (331c1-4). Nevertheless, Socrates offers first a proof that justice and piety are the same thing, then a proof that self-control and wisdom are the same thing. Despite the fallacious character of these proofs,¹²³ Protagoras gives his assent to Socrates' points. In the course of the third proof Protagoras discerns where Socrates is headed: He means to get Protagoras to concede that the good has an objective value.

However, Socrates' *immediate* aim is to demonstrate that justice and soundness of mind are the same thing. In order to do so, he has Protagoras grant a series of propositions: 1) Those who do wrong show soundness of mind (σωφροσύνη); 2) To show soundness of mind is to show logical thinking (εὖ φρονεῖν); 3) To show logical thinking is to exercise right decision-making (εὖ βουλευέσθαι) in the execution of the wrong. The language of this last concession (εὖ βουλευέσθαι) signifies that an important step has been reached. Socrates is on the point of clarifying Protagoras' entire educational program, summed up earlier by the sophist as precisely εὐβουλία (318e5) (quoted in section 2.0). The unity of the virtues is no longer the only issue at stake. Socrates is not interested any longer in just showing that σωφροσύνη is justice, but that εὐβουλία *qua* εὐβουλία proves it to be. It is Protagoras' philosophy that is now being examined.

The next concession Socrates draws from Protagoras is that one exercises right decision-making if one succeeds (εὖ πράττειν) in the perpetration of wrong. Here he asks Protagoras if he considers good things to be beneficial. It is now clear where Socrates is going. He means to equate the good with the beneficial and the beneficial with what is just.¹²⁴ Once he thus equates the good with justice, he will return to εὖ πράττειν and interpret it as to "do good (and so just) things" instead of the common meaning "fare well, succeed." He will then conclude that, since to

¹²³ For the common view that these proofs are fallacious, and an attempt to demonstrate that they are not, see Vlastos 1972: 415-458.

¹²⁴ Cf. McKirahan 1984: 22-23; Taylor 1991: 132.

fare well (now equivalent to “do good (and so just) things”) is a mark of right decision-making, one cannot exercise εὐβουλία unless that εὐβουλία leads him to enact just deeds.

However, Protagoras does not let him reach these conclusions. When asked if he considered good things to be beneficial things, he replied he did, and is even prepared to recognize a correlation between what is good and what is beneficial, but proceeds to give a series of examples to illustrate the fact that the beneficial (ὠφέλιμον) is a very varied and multifaceted thing (ποικίλον, παντοδαπόν) (334a3-c6). Therefore, the beneficial cannot be used to clarify what it means to fare well. As faring well was a mark of right decision-making, right decision-making cannot now be the same thing as justice. Protagoras wins. He has foiled Socrates’ attempt to define the sophist’s εὐβουλία as the discernment of an objective value, in this case the beneficial. It is this attempt to define the good objectively in the context of Protagorean εὐβουλία that indicates the presence of relativism in the passage.

Technically speaking, Protagoras does not mount the defense of εὐβουλία *in propria persona*. When Socrates asked if one showed soundness of mind in doing wrong, he replied that he himself (ἑγωγε) would be ashamed to say so, though many people do make that claim (333c1-3).¹²⁵ Then, when Socrates asks if he should address Protagoras or the many (τῶν πολλῶν), Protagoras tells him to address the many. Nevertheless, Protagoras’ emotional response to Socrates’ attempt to equate the good with the beneficial is indication enough that Protagoras is not simply parroting the multitude (333e2-4), as does also the applause his refutation of that same attempt elicits from his fellow sophists (334c7). It is merely insinuated at this point that Protagoras and “the many” bear a certain correlation. This insinuation becomes more meaningful as the dialogue proceeds.

¹²⁵ This statement, by the way, would then distance Protagoras from such sophists as Callicles and Thrasymachus.

2.3.2 The Fourth Proof

The fourth and final proof Socrates presents in his argument that the individual virtues are actually instances of a single virtue occurs after the interpretation of Simonides' poem. Socrates means to demonstrate that courage is really wisdom. The first attempt he makes at this demonstration fails (349e1-351b2). Protagoras points out that Socrates equated courage and daring (θάρσος) illegitimately (351a4-5). Socrates then undertakes a more complicated attempt to prove his point.

This second attempt involves the introduction of a new character – the Many (οἱ πολλοί). They are brought in in a roundabout way. Socrates begins by espousing (for dramatic purposes) the hedonistic doctrine that what is pleasurable is good, what is painful is bad, and rejecting the view of the Many that some painful things are good and some pleasurable things are bad. He then asks Protagoras if he agrees with himself or the Many (351c2-6). But Protagoras refuses to commit himself to any answer (351e3-7). However, the two of them can at least agree that wisdom and knowledge rule a person's behavior (352c8-d3) and that the Many are therefore wrong in thinking that wisdom and knowledge do not determine behavior, as they clearly do when they use such phrases as ὑπὸ ἡδονῆς, λύπης, θυμοῦ, ἔρωτος, φόβου ἡττᾶσθαι. This (apparent) agreement on the impossibility of ἀκράτεια makes possible the drawing of sides: Socrates and Protagoras in one corner, the Many in the other.¹²⁶

Socrates, backed by Protagoras, proceeds to converse with the Many and address their belief that painful things can be good and pleasurable things bad. He points out that what they call bad things result in good things, and *vice versa*. That being the case, they can now agree that the essence of the good, despite immediate circumstances, is pleasure and the essence of the bad

¹²⁶ As is taken for granted at 353c4: πειρασόμεθα γὰρ ἡμῖν ἐγώ τε καὶ Πρωταγόρας φράσαι.

is pain (353c1-354e2). In sum, Socrates has committed the Many to an (enlightened) hedonist philosophy.

He now turns to explain what the Many had meant with such phrases as “being overcome by pleasure.” It appears to mean that one is compelled to do what he knows to be bad because of pleasure. But since pleasure is good, as the recent elenchus showed, the thing one is compelled by pleasure to do must not be truly bad. Otherwise, there would be a laughable (γελοῖον) absurdity (354d1). Yet the phenomenon remains. One *does* sometimes find himself compelled to do what he knows to be bad, but does it anyway. To explain the phenomenon, it is agreed that it is a case of simple miscalculation of size, quantity, intensity and distance (356a3-5). When one is overcome so as to do a thing he knows to be bad, he is in reality choosing a thing whose painful consequences are greater than its pleasurable consequences.

2.3.3 An Alternative to the Mythos

Socrates now returns to the question of faring well (τὸ εὖ πράττειν) which Protagoras had evaded earlier. In recalling that question, the idea also recalls Protagoras’ relativism that was implicit in that discussion. Socrates then goes on to draw a conclusion from his treatment of the good and bad which will similarly recall Protagoras’ relativism. Supposing, he says, faring well consisted in our choosing behaviors according to a selection that recognized the true magnitudes of things, he then asks (356d3-e2):

Τίς ἂν ἡμῖν σωτηρία ἐφάνη τοῦ βίου; ἄρα ἡ μετρητικὴ τέχνη ἢ ἡ τοῦ φαινομένου δύναμις; ἢ αὕτη μὲν ἡμᾶς ἐπλάνα καὶ ἐποίει ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω πολλάκις μεταλαμβάνειν ταῦτά καὶ μεταμέλειν καὶ ἐν ταῖς πράξεσιν καὶ ἐν ταῖς αἵρέσεσιν τῶν μεγάλων τε καὶ μικρῶν, ἢ δὲ μετρητικὴ ἄκυρον μὲν ἂν ἐποίησε τοῦτο τὸ φάντασμα, δηλώσασα δὲ τὸ ἀληθές ἡσυχίαν ἂν ἐποίησεν ἔχειν τὴν ψυχὴν μένουσαν ἐπὶ τῷ ἀληθεῖ καὶ ἔσωσεν ἂν τὸν βίον;

This passage contains several echoes of Protagoras' thought. Socrates now denotes faring well (εὖ πράττειν) with the word σωτηρία. The word recalls Epimetheus' provision for the animals which he did for the sake of their σωτηρία (320e3). It recalls Zeus' gift of δίκη καὶ αἰδώς which was meant to preserve the humans (322c1). Thus Socrates takes the conversation back to the mythos.

Next, he asks if that σωτηρία is provided by ἡ μετρητικὴ τέχνη or ἡ τοῦ φαινομένου δύναμις. This opposition implies that the σωτηρία Protagoras had detailed in the mythos can be summed up as “the power of appearance.” The word and result suggest that Socrates has Protagoras' relativism in mind. First, φαινόμενον recalls the φάντασμα of *Tht.* 167b3, where Protagoras defends his relativism against the charge of inconsistency. Secondly, relying on φαντάσματα in the assessment of one's world results in a dizzying confusion in which one is compelled to assign different values to the same things at different times (ἐποίει ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω πολλάκις μεταλαμβάνειν ταῦτα) – a relativism of both physical and moral values.

Here, Socrates challenges that relativism. The recent discussion, he says, suggests that there is after all an instrument which can correct a person's faulty calculation of not only physical properties such as size and quantity, but also attributes that determine one's happiness and moral success. He clarifies that this instrument is knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) which he characterizes as an “art of measurement” (ἡ μετρητικὴ τέχνη). This is what allows one, whose own sense-impressions and judgments are faulty, to gain an accurate reading of reality. This definition of knowledge stands in stark contrast to Protagoras' relativism, as even the vocabulary poignantly indicates. Protagoras had offered ἄνθρωπος as the μέτρον of all that is. Socrates' discussion suggests knowledge measures better.

Having made this point, Socrates resumes his initial argument that courage and wisdom are equivalent according to his hedonistic demonstration. Error (ἐξαμαρτάνειν), he concludes, is not baseness, but ignorance due to a mistake in measurement (ἀμαθία) (357d-e). For instance, the coward in war places a less pleasurable thing (e. g. running away) over a more pleasurable thing (e. g. freedom from subjection). In other words, he has misinterpreted what is truly terrible (δεινά). Therefore, courage is the knowledge of what is and what is not terrible (360d4-5).

Thus Socrates brings the fourth proof to a close. This proof contained a refutation of two positions held by Protagoras. Not only did it demonstrate for Protagoras that wisdom and courage are indeed synonymous. But it also included a refutation of his relativism. Socrates' peroration now brings out this two-headed refutation with finesse. He observes that the two of them are in a laughable position. He himself began with the view that goodness (i.e. ἀρετή) was not teachable and attempted to show that "knowledge was all things (ὥς πάντα χρήματά ἐστιν ἐπιστήμη) (361b1), whereas Protagoras assumed that goodness was something other than knowledge and contended that it was teachable. But, since it is knowledge, then Socrates is right to equate wisdom and courage. Moreover, Socrates' claim that πάντα χρήματά ἐστιν ἐπιστήμη, being verbally corrective of Protagoras' human-measure dictum (πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἄνθρωπον εἶναι), implies that his relativism has in some way been refuted.

2.3.4 A *Peritropē* Implied

But how can Socrates consider any refutation to have taken place, when his conclusions rely on the hedonistic premise? Courage and wisdom are synonymous, only if the good is pleasure and the bad pain; and, more importantly, Protagoras' relativism is mistaken and goods and bads can be measured but only on the assumption that, again, the good is pleasure and the bad pain.

Protagoras will refute his own relativism, if he subscribes to the hedonistic view. But he is not a hedonist. So, the refutation appears to be pointless.

This problem, though, can be solved, if one takes into account the dramatic movements of this part of the dialogue and asks what meaning these movements suggest. First, as noted already, Socrates deployed the fourth proof as though Protagoras sided with him against the Many. However, these lines were incorrectly – and ironically – drawn. Actually Protagoras' view had more in common with the Many. When asked if he subscribed to the hedonistic view, Protagoras had replied no. He believed some pleasurable things *not* to be good and some painful things *not* to be bad, while there was a third class of neutrals (351d4-7). Now, this is precisely the view of the Many before Socrates challenges it (351c2-3). So it seems that Protagoras is just going along with Socrates, having made it clear that he did not commit himself to Socrates' position (351e3-7). He prefers to stand on the sidelines and observe how Socrates treats the opinion of the Many. It is noteworthy that he took this very same position earlier, when Socrates tried to equate the good with the beneficial (333c4-5).

Now that Protagoras is standing by, Socrates proceeds to interrogate the Many as though they were a character in the dialogue. He gains the concession from them that the good is pleasure (354c4-5) and the result of this concession is that, since there is an objective content to the good and bad, knowledge is the measure of all things, not the human. What then has dramatically happened? Protagoras and the Many agree on the nature of pleasure and pain, but then it is only the Many who are brought round to the hedonistic side.¹²⁷ This suggests that the Many become a dramatic “stand-in” for Protagoras. This “pinch hitting” for Protagoras now raises the question of the relationship between the two and, more importantly, it raises the

¹²⁷ Zeyl 1980: 257 believes Protagoras does express assent at 358b3. But Denyer 2008: 195 rightly stresses the vagueness inherent in the passage.

question of why Plato introduces the Many at all, seeing that Callias' house is full of potential interlocutors.

The reason, I suggest, is that Plato considers there to be an intimate relationship between Protagoras and the majority. In the *Theaetetus* Socrates attempts a *peritropē* ("turning the tables") on Protagoras' human-measure claim and does so in the context of majority opinion (see subsection 6.4.2). If Protagoras himself believes the human-measure claim, but the majority do not, then Protagoras is constrained by the human-measure claim to recognize the truth of the opinion of the majority (i.e. that the human-measure is false) (171a1-c7). Plato thus considers the human-measure claim to refute itself because it recognizes the truth of its own denial. However, he examines the human-measure claim in terms of Protagoras' relationship with the majority so that it is clear Plato thinks holding the human-measure claim commits its holder to the opinion of the majority.¹²⁸ When therefore in two separate passages of the *Protagoras* Plato associates Protagoras with the opinion of the Many, he is similarly implying the point he makes explicit in the *Theaetetus*: Protagoras is joined at the hip with the Many and whatever they do or think he must also; *if* the Many are hedonists, then Protagoras is, too; and *if* hedonists are objectivists, then Protagoras is, too. If in fact that is true, one must turn to the *Theaetetus*. Or, if the reader is a particularly diligent student in the Academy, he might try figuring it out himself. And this is, I suggest, the point of the implied *peritropē*: to encourage the student to work out for himself how relativism is self-refuting.

¹²⁸ As to just why he thinks so is an important question. I will suggest in chapter 4 (section 4.4) that Protagoras' relativism privileged the opinion of the majority in a certain locale, or tradition. Therefore, when Plato constructs a refutation of relativism that pits against Protagoras the Many (he might with the same effect have pitted against him an individual such as Theodorus, as he in fact began to do [*Tht.* 170d4]), Plato is adding, I suggest, an ironic flavor to the refutation: The opinion of the Many, which Protagoras meant to privilege, proves him to be wrong.

2.4 CONCLUSION

Since it thus appears to be the case that Protagoras' relativism occupies a place in the *Protagoras* comparable to, though by no means as extensive as, its place in the *Theaetetus*, I can now analyze the first section of the mythos in Protagoras' Great Speech and argue that it presents an evolutionary model of biological development for both the animal and human spheres. Behind the mythical trappings of gods and an absent-minded Titan a process of natural selection resembling the thought of Protagoras' contemporary Empedocles is taking place. In this way the section offers, I suggest, a model for interpreting the rest of the mythos where human society and morality is the theme.

3.0 THE MYTHOS OF PROTAGORAS: CONTEXT AND PREMISE

Although a good deal of Protagoras' ideas comes to us indirectly and secondhand through Plato, there is still good reason to consider this material a reliable and accurate, if sometimes ironic and irreverent, representation of Protagoras' thought, as I will attempt to show in the course of the dissertation (see esp. sections 4.3, 4.4, 6.4 and subsections 5.3.1, 6.1.1). The focal point for discussions of the political, as opposed to the philosophical, ideas of Protagoras is the lengthy speech given to him by Plato in his *Protagoras* (320c8-328d2). This "Great Speech," as it is often called, is self-consciously broken down by Plato's Protagoras into two parts. The first part, in the form of a mythos, describes how animal and human morality came to be, while the second, in the form of a logos, or a discourse using reasonable argumentation, treats the mode of education current in Athens at the time of the dialogue, and offers as well an explanation as to why base sons can be produced by excellent fathers.

In this and the following chapters I will discuss the first part of this speech, the mythos (320c8-322d5), whereas in this chapter specifically I will argue that the mythos should be read as an addition to, and not a variant of, the following logos. When this is done, it is seen that the account which the mythos offers of animal life and human society is an historical and anthropological one, using figurative languages and symbolic ideas to make real claims about the origin of life and society. Finally, these claims, I suggest, amount to an account of animal life that is based on an evolutionary model involving a type of natural selection which will serve as

the interpretive foundation for the second part of the mythos concerning human morality, which I will treat in chapter three.

3.1 THE MYTHOS: INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES

On the whole scholars have approached the mythos from one of two interpretive positions. They have either taken the mythos to be a symbolic rendering of the logos that follows. In this case the logos merely explicates the ideas the mythos expresses in figurative language and fanciful imagery. Alternatively, some regard it as a separate portion of Protagoras' speech with its own contribution to make to his ideas. It still of course incorporates a symbolic element, but adds something the logos does not, an account of the emergence of animal life and human society that is at base historical and anthropological. As the discussion below will attempt to show, the latter approach is the preferable one.

3.1.1 The Mythos as Equivalent to the Logos

According to the first view, to interpret the myth, one must refer to the logos. This approach has become almost standard. It is followed by Kagan, Schiappa and most recently Balot.¹²⁹ It ultimately derives from Kerferd who developed the idea most fully. According to him, the mythos preaches equality among all citizens. Equating justice and shame with the societal education Protagoras soon describes in the logos, he defines them as “the teaching which all people receive in the community.”¹³⁰ Since life in the polis thus imparts a basic level of justice and political virtue, “all have something to contribute to the discussion of moral and political

¹²⁹ Kagan 1965: 81-84; 92; Schiappa 2003: 180-187; Balot 2006: 74-78.

¹³⁰ 1953: 44.

questions.”¹³¹ Whether or not this is a cogent argument for egalitarianism has already been discussed.¹³² For now the point is that these scholars arrive at this view by regarding the mythos and logos as two sides of the same coin.

There is a textual problem with this approach. Protagoras addresses the logos to Socrates’ second doubt: Why do fathers not impart it to their sons? (324d6). This suggests that the mythos was meant to dispel *on its own* Socrates’ *first* doubt (viz. Is virtue teachable?). This suggestion is confirmed by Protagoras’ confidence that the mythos has indeed explained that question before he begins the logos (322d5-323a4). There is a conceptual problem, as well. As C. C. W. Taylor points out, the idea that the mythos is equivalent to the logos fails to explain the origin of morality. If justice and shame are merely the instruction imparted by the city as detailed in the logos, then Protagoras failed to use the mythos to explain how the city developed a morality to impart in the first place, a thing he clearly promised to do, when he undertook to explain how virtue (*ἀρετή*) is a thing teachable (*διδασκτόν*) (320c1).¹³³ For these two reasons, then, it does greater justice to the text to regard the mythos as a passage containing a meaning supplemental to the logos (cf. subsection 5.3.1).

3.1.2 The Mythos as Quasi-History

If separate from the logos, what then is its function? Those who have regarded it as a separate unit have viewed it as an historical account, incorporating figurative and symbolic elements, of human morality. For example, C. C. W. Taylor argues that the mythos explains how family-based morality became community-based. Taking the “scattered” existence of the humans

¹³¹ 1981: 144.

¹³² See subsection 1.4.1. It is assumed to be so by the scholars mentioned above, though Kerferd himself later expressed his doubts (1981: 144).

¹³³ 1991: 80.

(σποράδην) (322b1) to mean that they lived, not as individuals, but in groups, or tribes, he contends that the mythos details how humans learned to transfer the moral allegiance they owed to kinsmen and tribesmen to members of a larger, unrelated community.¹³⁴ A problem with this interpretation is that it just “passes the buck.” One must still ask how humans originally developed a sense of moral obligation to their kinsmen. Taylor is aware of this problem, but imputes the shortcoming to Protagoras himself.¹³⁵

Klaus Döring provides another attempt at finding in the mythos an explanation of the human morality. Regarding humans’ scattered existence *contra* Taylor as solitary and individual, he interprets the injustices people committed against each other as due to the fact that each individual considered himself to be the measure of right and wrong. Eventually, he realized the need for agreed upon rules, a contract, which the mythos calls alternately “justice and shame” and “ἡ ἔντεχνος σοφία σὺν πυρί.”¹³⁶ Döring’s interpretation is greatly facilitated by this equation of the gifts of “technical wisdom” with justice and shame. Since Prometheus’ gift and Zeus’ gift represent the same process, then human society (δίκη & αἰδώς) is the result of human intelligence, or προμήθεια. If this is so, then Protagoras explains the rise of society by a social contract theory.

It is difficult to agree with Döring that Protagoras only depicted the gifts of Prometheus and Zeus as separate occurrences to emphasize political virtue over human ingenuity (um die Sonderstellung der *politike technē* hervorzuheben).¹³⁷ The mythos goes to great lengths to indicate the separateness of the two gifts, as when it explains why Prometheus stole from Hephaestus and Athena and not from Zeus (321d1-e1). It is also difficult to accept his

¹³⁴ Ibid. 81.

¹³⁵ Ibid. 84-85.

¹³⁶ 1981: 110-111.

¹³⁷ Ibid. 110.

interpretation of the human-measure claim. For, by his reckoning, being the measure of all things amounts to an extreme form of egoism which was antithetical to civilization, a precondition of chaos and anarchy, which played no part once civilization developed. But Protagoras clearly meant his human-measure claim to have relevance in and for civilization.¹³⁸

3.1.3 The Mythos: The Evolution of Human Morality

These objections to Taylor's and Döring's interpretations aside, their basic interpretive premise that the mythos is a freestanding answer to the question of whether virtue is a thing teachable or not is preferable to Kerferd's approach that the logos is an "alternative statement" of the mythos.¹³⁹ Accordingly, I will follow Taylor's and Döring's approach and argue that the mythos presents a quasi-historical account of the origin of human morality and civilization. Specifically, instead of locating the cause of civilization in the beneficence of the gods, as Kerferd does, or in the contractual deal struck between individuals for the sake of material advantage or preservation, I will argue that the mythos offers an organic, evolutionary picture of human morality and civilization as a fortuitous, spontaneous coalescence of viewpoints between likeminded individuals. In order to do so, in this chapter I will discuss first the context of the mythos in order to show that morality is its basic theme; then I will discuss the first part of the mythos itself in which the animal kingdom is treated in order to draw attention to evolutionary elements which Protagoras borrowed, I will suggest, from Empedocles of Agrigentum. Once

¹³⁸ Also, Plato's strong disapproval of the claim suggests it had more immediate relevance to contemporary life (see *Tht.* 152a1-b7, 161c2-179b9; *Cra.* 391c5-7 [especially τὰ τῇ τοιαύτῃ ἀληθείᾳ ῥηθέντα]). Döring might mean to imply that Protagoras sanctioned behavior based on this egoistic version of the human-measure claim *as far as the laws allowed*, but this would be inconsistent with *Tht.* 167cd, where the human-measure is shown to contribute to moral, legal and normal behavior. Cf. *Prt.* 351b7-c2.

¹³⁹ 1953: 44.

these points are established, I will continue in chapter three to chart this evolutionary process to the point where human morality, and so civilization, finally emerges.

My interpretation has several important implications. First, human morality turns out to be the consensus of the community, not one agreed upon with a view to the community's welfare, but one that results from the biological preponderance of one viewpoint over another. Consequently, moral values are relative, first to the individual, then to the community. Thus I agree with Döring that Protagoras' human-measure claim is operative in the myth. Finally, virtue (ἀρετή) becomes a cultural skill (τέχνη), the ability to live in conformity with one's social environment, taught, like carpentry or blacksmithing or tanning or medicine, from generation to generation, only, unlike those crafts, collectively. The relevance of these ideas to the Athenian democracy is direct. The high premium placed on consensus made decision-making, participated in by all the citizens, virtually indispensable, while the equation of virtue with basic social and moral competence made elite and commoner alike appear sufficiently qualified for leadership positions.

3.2 THE CONTEXT

The mythos as a whole forms the first part of an extended response to concerns voiced by Socrates about the education of Hippocrates. Socrates has come to recommend the young Hippocrates to Protagoras, but has requested that Protagoras explain what it is Hippocrates will learn (318a). In response Protagoras has promised to teach him right decision-making (εὐβουλία) in both private and public affairs (318e5-319a2). Here Socrates, in a move typical of his method, restates Protagoras' εὐβουλία under the phrase ἡ πολιτικὴ τέχνη which he takes as a thing that

produces good citizens (ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς πολίτας). He gains Protagoras' assent to this change of terms (319a6-7).¹⁴⁰ This change of terms thus amplifies Protagoras' instruction. It is no longer just right decision-making, but is much more comprehensive: Protagoras will teach Hippocrates how to fulfill the role of a good citizen as well as how to exercise leadership in the polis.

3.2.1 ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς πολίτης

But it might be suggested that this amplification, represented in the phrase ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς πολίτης, belongs to Socrates and is foisted upon an unwitting Protagoras.¹⁴¹ The course of their interchange shows that this is not the case. In voicing his concerns, Socrates offers another label for Protagoras' instruction, ἡ ἀρετή (319e1). At first the demonstrative pronoun used with it (αὕτη) implies that Socrates is merely describing the political art as a particular excellence or ability. However, when in his peroration Socrates categorically states his erstwhile assumption that "virtue is not a thing teachable" (οὐχ ἡγοῦμαι διδακτὸν εἶναι ἀρετήν), it is clear he has again extended the initial idea of civic excellence to include moral excellence as well.

However, in doing so it is clear that he is not entrapping Protagoras, but clarifying him. When after the mythos Protagoras concludes that the Athenians behave reasonably in including everybody in their political deliberations, he offers a definition of the curriculum he offers, which he now expresses in a phrase that combines the three terms so far advanced (ἡ πολιτικὴ τέχνη, ἀρετή and εὐβουλία) into the single ἡ πολιτικὴ ἀρετή and proceeds to make clear, or rather emphasizes, its moral dimension (ἣν δεῖ διὰ δικαιοσύνης πᾶσαν ἰέναι καὶ σωφροσύνης) (323a1-2). Therefore, when Protagoras said he would make Hippocrates every day better

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Cole 1966: 117.

¹⁴¹ So Morrison 1941: 8-9 who also argues that Protagoras reacts by responding first to the definition of ἡ πολιτικὴ τέχνη as "good citizenship," and later shifting to a definition of it as "being good at politics." It is more likely that Protagoras understands the term to cover both aspects from the beginning (Kerferd 1953: 44-45; Denyer 2008: 96).

(βελτίων), he meant just what he said (318a8). Protagoras will impart to Hippocrates and anybody else who takes his course a goodness that will enable him to take on a leading role in the political, as well as moral, life of his city. The ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς πολίτης embodies a dimension of both ability and morality.

Protagoras' interest in morality also becomes clear from the two questions Socrates puts to him. In sum, Socrates challenges the very premise that this goodness can be imparted by teaching. He offers two arguments that it is not a thing teachable, both of them empirical. First, the Athenians, intelligent people, do not think this goodness is teachable. At least, the fact that they consult all citizens on public matters implies as much (319d5-7).¹⁴² Secondly, fathers who have this goodness are not able to pass it on to their sons (319d7-e3). If it could be taught, then *a fortiori* fathers would not neglect instilling it in their sons. As it is, they let them roam free if by chance they may light upon it accidentally (320a3).

Socrates' understanding of this goodness is problematic in that it leaves the acquisition of goodness a mystery. Since it cannot be taught by a teacher or a father or a city, one would suppose that it is a thing inborn. Yet this cannot be, since Socrates suggests that one might come upon it by accident (αὐτόματοι). An incoherence results, but it is an incoherence for dramatic purposes. That is to say, Socrates is not implying an alternative, confusing definition of goodness, but implying that there may be something incongruous in Protagoras' version of goodness.

Socrates' introductory conversation with Protagoras has thus set the stage for the mythos. Specifically, it has created the expectation for an account of human political and moral goodness

¹⁴² Socrates forebears to explain what they think, whether they think it is inborn or non-existent. Xen. *Mem.* 4.2.3-4 suggests he thought the latter.

(ἀρετή, ἡ πολιτικὴ ἀρετή/τέχνη, εὐβουλία).¹⁴³ Protagoras provides this account. Only, since it is clothed in mythical dress, it is likely to exercise the audience's ingenuity. In fact, Protagoras says as much. Given the option of expressing his views in a mythos or a logos, he chooses the former because it seems to him to be χαριέστερον to tell a mythos (320c6-7). He is not merely saying it would be more pleasing, but more engaging, more intellectually stimulating.¹⁴⁴

3.2.2 The Mythos

The mythos begins at the point of creation. When it was the appointed time for the mortal creatures to come into life, the gods instructed Prometheus and Epimetheus to apportion the appropriate powers to each of them, but Epimetheus obtained permission from his brother to perform the task alone. The powers he apportioned were of a great variety, some even diametrically opposite. He gave strength to one species, speed to another. Some he equipped with predatory powers (claws, horns, beaks, etc.), others with means of escape. Thus by a compensatory distribution (ἐπανισῶν) he removed the danger of mutual annihilation (ἀλληλοφθορίαι). He then gave protection to each against the elements. To some he gave hair and hard hides, others he shod with hoofs or shag or hard, bloodless skin. He then made arrangements for their diet. Some were to eat grass, others fruit; some roots, others meat. And from those who would be carnivorous he took away the capacity for numerous offspring, while to those who would fall prey to the carnivores he gave it. Epimetheus' distribution follows a clear pattern. He progresses from the protection against each other to protection against the elements to diet to reproduction. At each step he makes sure that the powers balance each other

¹⁴³ After all, that had been the original purpose in coming to Callias' house, i.e. to discover if Protagoras knew what was good and bad (τί χρηστὸν καὶ πονηρόν) (313e2-5).

¹⁴⁴ Cf. the words χαριεντισμός and χαριεντίζομαι.

out. But, despite the variety of these powers, they all are designed by Epimetheus to secure the same end, preservation of the species (σωτηρία), according to an ecological equilibrium.

When finished, Epimetheus realizes he has not left any powers for the humans. On the very day they are scheduled to enter life Prometheus intervenes and bestows upon humans τὴν ἔντεχνον σοφίαν σὺν πυρί, which he had stolen from Hephaestus and Athena (321d1-2). This “wisdom” enables the humans to develop the tools they need to survive, *on an individual basis*. For they are thoroughly asocial. Whenever they try to congregate for the sake of protection against the wild beasts, they invariably commit injustices against each other and dissolve the very community wherein lies their salvation. After this state of affairs has continued for some time, Zeus bestows on them, through his messenger Hermes, justice (δίκη) and shame (αἰδώς). Since this grant is made to every individual, human communities are now characterized by systems of order and bonds that bring them together in friendship (κόσμοι τε καὶ δεσμοὶ φιλίας συναγωγοί). Human beings now have virtue (ἡ πολιτικὴ τέχνη/ἀρετή).

Socrates’ first question is thus answered. The Athenians are right to think that everybody has ἡ πολιτικὴ τέχνη (ἀρετή); but that does not mean, as Socrates had supposed, that it is not a thing teachable, an idea implicit in the mythos (and rendered explicit in the “rider” to the mythos [323a5-324d1]). In this way, the mythos gives to Socrates’ questions a response that appears to be self-contradictory, as Socrates had implied (see subsection 3.2.1): Virtue, Protagoras asserts, is indeed possessed by everybody *and* it is a thing imparted by teaching. Any interpretation of the mythos must make sense of this apparent contradiction (cf. section 5.5). Reading it as a mythical dramatization of an evolutionary process ultimately resolves, I suggest, this contradiction, but in order to identify this process, Protagoras’ treatment of the animal kingdom must first be examined.

3.3 THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

Protagoras' treatment of the animal kingdom provides key information for the interpretation of the rest of the mythos. In it he expounds an entirely secular explanation of the appearance of animate life on earth and points to biological, accidental and evolutionary causes as the basic "first beginnings." However, he presents this biological explanation in terms of the agency of divine beings. Thus, Protagoras mythologizes an explanation of animal life which ironically calls into question the mythological trappings of his explanation. In other words, Protagoras is being quite *χαρίεις*.

3.3.1 The Gods

According to the mythos the motive force is the gods. Epimetheus gives the animals their powers, Prometheus endows humans with "technical wisdom" and Zeus bestows on them justice and shame. Few scholars have taken the presence of the gods to be literal.¹⁴⁵ For one, it conflicts with Protagoras' known agnosticism.¹⁴⁶ Secondly, the mythos has a revisionist dimension that betrays an attempt at rationalization. Epimetheus is given a role that mythology has never imputed to him, as Socrates even seems to notice,¹⁴⁷ and in accordance with his name Epimetheus botches the job. Contrary to the Hesiodic and Aeschylean versions, Prometheus steals fire, not from Zeus, but from a more appropriate source, Hephaestus and Athena. Protagoras is thus rationalizing the old stories to suit a new agenda of his own. For, not only are Hephaestus and Athena obvious symbols for technological know-how, but quite possibly bear democratic connotations as well, since the temple overlooking the agora, commonly referred to

¹⁴⁵ See Müller 1967: 140-148; Guthrie 1971: 64; Kerferd 1981: 167-8 (but cf. 1953: 45); Taylor 1991: 80; Denyer 2008: 100-101, 106. Havelock 1957: 92 regards them as literal, and therefore as a Platonic contamination.

¹⁴⁶ See DK 80 B4; cf. *Tht.* 162d5-e1.

¹⁴⁷ *Prt.* 361d2: Socrates' words are: ὥς φης σύ.

as the Hephaestum (or the Theseum), but belonging rather to both Hephaestus and Athena, was part of the Periclean building program.¹⁴⁸ Thirdly, the gods are not very godlike. Not only does Epimetheus make a mistake in the divisions of powers, but Zeus does not have the foresight to see humans will need justice and shame until humankind is in dire straits. And when he does give justice and shame, there is still the chance that somebody will miss the dole. If the gods are to be taken literally, then Protagoras is not following Greek tradition, but a demotic, Aristophanic slant on Greek tradition.

In fact, the mythos itself insinuates they are not just a device, but are to be taken as such by the listener. It begins: “For there was once a time when the gods existed, but the races of mortal creatures did not. When the appointed time of generation (γένεσις) came for these, too (καὶ τούτοις) (320d1), etc.” The solitary καί implies the gods had a genesis. Greek philosophy had already challenged this idea. In his *Silloi* Xenophanes had laughed at mortals for supposing that the gods are born (γεννᾶσθαι) and share their dress, speech and likeness (DK 21 B14; cf. B23). If Protagoras’ gods were literal, one would expect him to have a loftier notion of the creative agents of mankind.

Nor is this the only place in the mythos where Protagoras undermines the literality of the gods. Once humans received, he says, a share in the divine lot, they first, because of their relationship with god (διὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ συγγένειαν), began to believe in gods – the only animal (ζῷον μόνον) to do so (322a2-3). In light of what has been said about the creation of humans so far, this relationship cannot be literal and Protagoras must mean that because of the similarity that *resulted* from the gift of intelligence humans believed in gods.¹⁴⁹ This resulting similarity has either one of two meanings. Either the moment they received intelligence they instantly

¹⁴⁸ Wycherley 1978: 68-71.

¹⁴⁹ So Guthrie 1957: 88; Kerferd 1981: 168; Taylor 1991: 84. The earlier solution was to remove the phrase διὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ συγγένειαν as a later gloss (Adam & Adam 1893: 112-113).

became aware of the existence of the gods and their similarity with them or they were able to *infer* the gods' existence. Protagoras points out that the human race did not have any realization, but “conceived a belief” (ἐνόμισεν). So, it is more likely that Protagoras means they inferred the gods' existence. This meaning accounts for the wordplay that charts the course of their cogitation. Once humans received a divine portion (θείας...μοίρας), they conceived a belief in divine beings (θεοῦς) because of their relationship with the divine (τοῦ θεοῦ). Protagoras subtly points out that, despite the activity of Prometheus and Zeus (via Hermes) for the benefit of humankind, humans still had to infer the existence of gods. This is a startling departure from the rationale of the myth, where gods and men are supposed to be interacting. But the departure makes the point that the gods are a screen and implies moreover that religion is a human construct.¹⁵⁰ Consequently, when he adds that they also inferred what the gods looked like in constructing cult-images, there is the strong suggestion that he is making the same point Xenophanes made when he declared that, had they the means, horses and cattle would depict their gods in the appearance of horses and cattle (DK 21 B15).¹⁵¹

3.3.2 Ecological Equilibrium

It has been suggested that the compensatory distribution of the animal powers is evidence that Protagoras is here assuming, if not gods *per se*, then an intelligent agent, much like Anaxagoras' *Nous*.¹⁵² The most compelling piece of evidence for this view is the similarity of Protagoras'

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Kerferd 1981: 168. However, his assertion that Protagoras treats religion as “a positive human phenomenon with a valuable function to perform in societies” goes farther, I think, than the mythos.

¹⁵¹ For another similarity, besides the two mentioned here, between Protagoras' and Xenophanes' opinions about the gods, compare the former's claim that “obscurity” (ἀδηλότης) surrounds all discourse on the gods (DK 80 B4) with the latter's denial of certain knowledge on the gods (DK 21 B34). Cf. Barnes 1979: vol. II. 147-148.

¹⁵² McNeal 1986: 309-310.

compensatory distribution with an observation Herodotus makes when discussing the winged serpents of Arabia (3.107-109):

Καί κως τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ προνοίη, ὥσπερ καὶ οἰκός ἐστι, ἐοῦσα σοφή, ὅσα μὲν ψυχὴν τε δειλὰ καὶ ἐδώδιμα, ταῦτα μὲν πάντα πολύγονα πεποίηκε, ἵνα μὴ ἐπιλίπη κατεσθιόμενα, ὅσα δὲ σχέτλια καὶ ἀνηρά, ὀλιγόγονα (3.108.2).

Herodotus then cites as an example of the former the hare and of the latter the lioness. The similarity with what Protagoras says at 321b5-6 is striking, indeed verbal. Protagoras uses the words πολυγονία and ὀλιγογονία, while Herodotus uses the adjectival forms of the same words. One is therefore tempted to conclude that the sophist and the historian must have both accounted for this phenomenon of the animal kingdom with reference to the same cause, namely τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ προνοίη. Although Protagorean ideas in Herodotus is not unlikely,¹⁵³ it is unlikely that Herodotus owes the notion of divine providence to one who was agnostic and who excluded from discourse and writing all talk about the gods.¹⁵⁴

Moreover, the Herodotean passage contains subtle, but significant differences from the Protagorean version. Herodotus' introduction of divine providence appears to be a special point *he* wishes to make. "After a fashion," he says, "the forethought of the divine, being *as is reasonable* wise, etc." According to Herodotus, divine forethought designed the animal kingdom. In Protagoras' myth, Epimetheus, the antithesis of forethought, is the designer. And Protagoras explains Epimetheus' mistake by commenting that he was not particularly smart (ἄτε δὴ οὐκ οὐ πάνυ τι σοφὸς ὢν, 321b6-7). Protagoras attributes the ecological balance of the animal kingdom to an agent that is anything but provident. Herodotus does the opposite. Just as Protagoras explains the creation of the animals by remarking that Epimetheus was not wise (σοφός), Herodotus remarks that providence is in fact wise (σοφή) and, significantly, feels the

¹⁵³ See fn. 424 subsection 8.3.3.

¹⁵⁴ *Tht.* 162d5-e1.

need to support the claim with an appeal to common sense (ὥσπερ καὶ οἰκός ἐστι). Not only do the two writers have different assumptions on providence, but their respective phraseology suggests the relationship here was not one of influence, but disagreement (cf. section 8.3).

And there is yet another difference. As How and Wells rightly observe, Herodotus' conception of divine providence is that it is a benevolent thing.¹⁵⁵ In other words, Herodotus' view of creation is anthropocentric. He goes on in the present passage to point out that all other snakes, besides the flying Arabian serpents (which eat their way out of their mother's womb), lay eggs and hatch hordes of offspring because they do not threaten man's existence (ἀνθρώπων οὐ δηλήμονες) (3.109.3). For Herodotus, divine providence looks out for humanity. This anthropocentric view stands in contrast to Protagoras' myth. There humans are but another animal (320c8-d3),¹⁵⁶ and the ecological balance Epimetheus establishes is for the sake of the animals, to ensure that none of them perishes, not to guarantee, as in Herodotus, that man's table will always be heavy-laden. Though Protagoras and Herodotus refer to the same ecological balance, their views concerning the power behind it could not be more different. Herodotus' allows room for *προνοίη*; Protagoras' does not.

It is better therefore to interpret the ecological balance Epimetheus establishes as the result of a natural process without any intelligent design. Weak animals are hyper-reproductive, and predators are not, not because *νοῦς* or *προνοίη* designed them so, but because that is simply the way it turned out. Along these lines one must imagine a stage in which imbalance characterized the powers of the animals. For example, predators could have many offspring and weak creatures only a few. Then, by a gradual process of selection, the weak creatures that

¹⁵⁵ How and Wells 1928: ad loc. D. Asheri 2007: 501 regards providence here as an instance of "a typical compromise between transcendental and immanent teleology" and offers parallels from Xenophanes and Anaxagoras.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. 322a4: *μόνον ζῶον*.

happened to have πολυγονία survived, while the predators that had the same trait became extinct because of internecine aggression.

3.3.3 Necessity (Ανάγκη)

Such an idea of evolutionary selection is found in Aristotle's *Physics* B 198b10ff. Aristotle is arguing that nature operates for an express end (ἐνεκά του) against the view that it operates by random necessity (ἐξ ἀνάγκης, ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου). The proponents of the necessity-theory cite rain and teeth as evidence. It rains because water is drawn up, cools and falls by necessity.¹⁵⁷ If a shower destroys somebody's crops on the threshing floor, it did not rain for that purpose; that was merely accident. Similarly, the incisors are sharp, while the molars are flat, not by teleological design, but by evolutionary process. This evolutionary process is summed up as follows:

ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων μερῶν, ἐν οἷς δοκεῖ ὑπάρχειν τὸ ἐνεκά του. ὅπου μὲν οὖν ἅπαντα συνέβη ὥσπερ καὶ εἰ ἐνεκά του ἐγίνετο, ταῦτα μὲν ἐσώθη ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου συστάντα ἐπιτηδείως, ὅσα δὲ μὴ οὕτως, ἀπώλετο καὶ ἀπόλλυται, καθάπερ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς λέγει τὰ βουγενῆ ἀνδρόπρωρα (B 198b27-32).

Characteristics which appear designed for an end actually just developed that way by accident (ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου συστάντα ἐπιτηδείως) and because they were “fitly developed” (ἐπιτηδείως), they survived (ἐσώθη), while the traits that developed otherwise disappeared and continue to disappear (ἀπώλετο καὶ ἀπόλλυται).

Protagoras, I suggest, has this necessity-theory in mind. This appears so both by the process of elimination: The gods in the mythos cannot be literal gods, nor can they represent an intelligence immanent in material; and also by more positive evidence. As commented above, the character of Epimetheus is the most noticeable departure Protagoras makes from the Hesiodic

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Ar. *Nub.* 367-378.

and Aeschylean versions of the Prometheus myth. Indeed, in the earlier versions he is not much more than a name. But in Protagoras' mythos he is promoted to designer of the animal kingdom. The reason is his name. As "Afterthought," he is an appropriate symbol for an inchoate idea of natural selection, which posits a set of creatures with random characteristics that a law of survival *subsequently* whittles down to a harmonious, interlocking subset. This law, being a force of nature, cannot be called purposeful or intelligent, just as Epimetheus is expressly denied intelligence (οὐ πᾶν τι σοφός).

Besides being an appropriate symbol, the behavior Epimetheus exhibits is significant. The obvious inference from his "stupidity" is the fact that he erred in the case of humans. The natural process of generation, Protagoras implies, is not reasoned, but prone to error. This being the case, Protagoras would then be suggesting a major point: Nature errs. This point establishes a connection with the *Physics* passage. To refute the adherents to the necessity-theory, Aristotle explains how mistakes (ἁμαρτίαι) can occur (B 199a33-b5), thereby implying that his opponents had used arguments based on "natural mistakes" to support their theory that the material world came, and comes, about by a type of natural selection, which they denoted as necessity, or the logically necessary outcome (ἀνάγκη).

3.3.4 Empedocles of Agrigentum

Another connection between Protagoras' mythos and the *Physics* passage is established through a third party. The *Physics* passage links this necessity-theory with the pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles of Agrigentum, who developed the idea that the universe was composed of four elements, or roots (ρίζώματα): earth, fire, water, air. These elements, as they are brought together by Love (Φιλότης, Φιλίη) and driven and held apart by Strife (Νεῖκος), occasion a random

mingling of traits and features that results in both ordinary and unusual creatures who by a law of adaptability are reduced to the forms familiar to experience. If Protagoras means his mythos to signify a coming-to-be by a similar process of selection, then the presence of Empedoclean ideas in his mythos would strengthen that idea. Interestingly, tradition places both men at Thurii in Italy around the same time (see subsection 7.1.3), while Plato is witness that Protagoras spent time on Empedocles' native Sicily (*Hp. Ma.* 282d).

As it turns out, the mythos does indeed have several ideas in common with Empedoclean thought (in addition to the fact that Epimetheus behaves much like the “necessity” of Aristotle’s Empedoclean followers). In the first place, Protagoras’ gods fashion mortal creatures out of earth and fire and “everything else that is mixed with earth and fire” (320d2-3). These are have been taken by several scholars as the four elements and as a reference to Empedoclean science.¹⁵⁸

Moreover, not only does Protagoras’ “stuff” of creation resemble Empedocles’, but their respective modes of creation are similar. Empedocles explains the emergence of humans as follows:

Νῦν δ’ ἄγ’, ὅπως ἀνδρῶν τε πολυκλαύτων τε γυναικῶν
ἐννυχίους ὄρηκας ἀνήγαγε κρινόμενον πῦρ,
τῷδνε κλύ’· οὐ γὰρ μῦθος ἀπόσκοπος οὐδ’ ἀδαήμων.
Οὐλοφνεῖς μὲν πρῶτα τύποι χθονὸς ἐξανέτελλον,
ἀμφοτέρων ὕδατός τε καὶ εἶδος αἶσαν ἔχοντες·
τοὺς μὲν πῦρ ἀνέπεμπε θέλον πρὸς ὁμοῖον ἰκέσθαι,
οὔτε τί πω μελέων ἐρατὸν δέμας ἐμφαίνοντας
οὔτ’ ἐνοπὴ οἶόν τ’ ἐπιχώριον ἀνδράσι γυῖον (DK 31 B62).

In Protagoras’ mythos mortals creatures, humans included, are fashioned under the earth and are brought up to the light, just as here in Empedocles’ poem men and women are in the dark (ἐννυχίους) and rise out of earth (χθονὸς ἐξανέτελλον), like plants. Again, in the Empedoclean passage humans are uncompounded, simple forms (οὐλοφνεῖς), just as in Protagoras’ mythos

¹⁵⁸ See Denyer 2008: 101 for the argument that they are the four elements and Guthrie 1957: 85 & McNeal 1986: 316 for the Empedoclean influence.

mortal creatures are masses that have not yet received body parts. These body parts, or δυνάμεις, are self-existent for Protagoras, able to be attached or removed as Epimetheus sees fit. Similarly, Empedocles imagines a body (δέμας) without members (οὔτε τί πω μελέων), voice or reproductive organ. Another fragment of Empedocles makes the same point:

ἦ πολλὰ μὲν κόρσαι ἀναύχενες ἐβλάστησαν,
γυμνοὶ δ' ἐπλάζοντο βραχίονες εὐνίδες ὤμων,
ὄμματά τ' οἷ(α) ἐπλανᾶτο πενητεύοντα μετώπων (DK 31 B57).

Neckless heads shoot forth, arms without shoulders wander as well as eyes begging for brows.

Thus, both Protagoras and Empedocles envision mortal creatures as entities independent of their constituent parts. What is more, they both call these primordial masses “types,” Empedocles with the noun τύποι (B62.4), Protagoras through the verb τυποῦσιν (320d2). Contrast the Diodoran cosmology, where humans differentiate between each other precisely because they have distinguishing τύποι (DK 55 B5.1, v.38).¹⁵⁹

3.3.5 Survival (σωτηρία)

These similarities between Protagoras’ mythos and Empedocles’ poem are not, I suggest, accidental. Protagoras incorporates Empedoclean evolutionary selection by having a non-intelligent agent (Epimetheus) set up a rational, balanced ecology. The motive force is not the gods, but necessity, the impersonal force that guarantees a logically necessary outcome, given certain preconditions. This being the case, a crucial implication follows. It is said in several places in Protagoras’ mythos that Epimetheus distributes the powers *for the sake of preservation* (σωτηρία) (e.g. 321b6). Since divine, and rational, design is, as I have argued, merely a cover for process of selection, σωτηρία cannot be the end, but rather the result, the fortuitous outcome of necessity – a meaning the word is capable of, as in the *Physics* passage things that “randomly

¹⁵⁹ For the provenance of the Diodoran cosmology, see fn. 164.

came together fitly survived” (ἔσώθη). Just so is Epimetheus’ provision of preservation a symbol for such a chance survival by selection.

3.4 CONCLUSION

Rather than a mythical equivalent to the logos, the mythos Protagoras tells at the beginning of the “Great Speech” in the *Protagoras* should be regarded as separate from the logos and contributing a substantive answer of its own to Socrates’ questions. That answer amounts to a quasi-historical account of the origin of human morality and civilization. Towards the formulation of that account, Protagoras begins with a treatment of the coming-to-be of the animal kingdom in order to introduce several foundational ideas: the symbolic character of the gods in the mythos, the compensatory equilibrium that obtains throughout the animal world, and the idea of necessity (or necessary outcome) as the motive force in their coming to be as they are. When combined, these ideas suggest that Protagoras is making use of the evolutionary model of survival by selection, as developed by Empedocles of Agrigentum, as the basis for his discussion of the origin of human morality and civilization which he treats in the remaining portion of the mythos.

4.0 THE MYTHOS OF PROTAGORAS: THE ORIGINS OF HUMAN SOCIETY

Having covered the animal kingdom, the mythos proceeds to explain the cause of human survival and ultimately the formation of human government. On the whole, the human section of the mythos will echo the animal section. The causes that brought humans together were as accidental and fortuitous as the distribution of the animal powers, and as the animal powers had been signified through Epimetheus, so now human survival will be represented through Prometheus and the Zeus-Hermes unit.

4.1 HUMAN INTELLIGENCE

When Epimetheus finished distributing the powers to the mortal creatures, it was discovered that he had failed to provide for the humans. To correct his error, Prometheus steals ἡ ἔντεχνος σοφία σὺν πυρί from Hephaestus and Athena and gives it to the humans as their special power (δύναμις). This “technical wisdom with fire” clearly denotes intelligence, but what are the characteristics of this intelligence?

4.1.1 Innate or Developed Intelligence?

Should this intelligence be regarded as representing an innate intelligence? G. B. Kerferd makes the argument that it should. He regards this intelligence, as well as the other animal powers, as

innate because both the animals and the humans receive their powers before coming into the light.¹⁶⁰ While his view appreciates the symbolism of the mythos, it fails to take into account its narrative and structure. Prometheus clearly stands for the προμήθεια of humankind (cf. *Prt.* 361d1-3). But it is important to notice that he fills this role only by acting as corrector to this brother's mistake. An important question then is why Protagoras has his humans receive intelligence from the correction of an original error. As the sequence of events itself suggests, it was in order to indicate that human intelligence came from their want and weakness. Therefore, if there was a time when humans were pitifully deprived creatures, one cannot consider their intelligence to be innate. Any other mortal creature, exposed to similar circumstances, might have developed similar intelligence. It is not that humans, when they came to be, were intelligent, but that they were made that way by necessity. Their intelligence is the logically necessary outcome (see subsection 3.3.3 for ἀνάγκη) of their condition of powerlessness. As for Kerferd's argument, he equates light with life, though one can just as easily take it to signify the full development of the living creatures' biology.

Moreover, taking human intelligence to be innate because it was given before life assumes that Prometheus stands for a real divine being, as Kerferd in fact does (subsection 3.3.1). However, there are problems with seeing Prometheus in this way. Upon seeing his brother's mistake, Prometheus steals "technical wisdom with fire" from Hephaestus and Athena. On a revisionist note the mythos then adds that he did not bestow virtue and political skill on humans, only intelligence, because the former was with Zeus on the Olympian acropolis. Now, two reasons keep Prometheus from venturing up to Zeus' palace: It was not possible (οὐκ ἐτί ἐνεχόρει) and, even if it were, Zeus' guards were quite dreadful (321c7-322a2). If one took Prometheus as a divine agent, even in mythical terms that would mean that he is not nearly as

¹⁶⁰ 1953: 43; 1981: 133.

προμηθής as tradition makes him. In both Hesiod and Aeschylus there is no obstacle that Prometheus cannot surmount, at least until he is chained to the Caucasian crag. Here, however, he is not nearly as clever as tradition makes him. The traditional Prometheus is not being evoked.

On the other hand, if Prometheus represents the natural, biological development of human intelligence, his actions make perfect sense. Humans developed in the same context of survival as the other animals. Their distinctive feature is the absence of a distinctive feature. Their lot is lack. Because they do not have anatomical features to protect, feed and clothe themselves, they learn to do so by artificial means; those who did not, died. It is a natural process. That is why they do not have virtue and the political skill, because their intelligence (Prometheus) cannot yet reach that height (Olympus).

4.1.2 The Great Power of Human Intelligence

Protagoras calls this intelligence ἡ ἐντέχνης σοφία σὺν πυρί (or ἡ ἔμπυρος τέχνη). The words themselves, as well as the victims from whom it was stolen, at first glance suggest that this intelligence is nothing more than skill at crafts. Indeed, Protagoras himself later calls it ἡ δημιουργικὴ τέχνη (322b3). So has it been interpreted.¹⁶¹ What challenges this view, though, is the fact that humans, once they become intelligent, are able to accomplish feats that require more than banal know-how. First, they conceived a belief in gods. That is not to say that Protagoras means literal gods, but that the humans analyzed the power of their intelligence, recognized it was much more than the animals could do, postulated that there existed invisible beings and inferred, moreover, that they were related to them. A brief comparison of this “origin of religion” with other fifth-century formulations is instructive. According to Sextus Empiricus, Prodicus, Protagoras’ younger contemporary, said the ancients saw the sun, moon, rivers and springs and

¹⁶¹ E.g. Loenen dat. 1940: 5.

considered them gods on account of the benefit they derived from them (θεοὺς ἐνόμισαν διὰ τὴν ἀπ’ αὐτῶν ὠφέλειαν, S. E. M. 9.18 = DK 84 B5).¹⁶² Prodicus’ construal recognizes that primitive humans must have a primitive mind. Similarly, Critias (or possibly Euripides) put forward the view that the gods were a necessary lie invented by a wise man to prevent people from committing crimes in secret.¹⁶³ If it were not for this wise man, humans would never have thought about gods. Protagoras’ mythos stands in sharp contrast to these two “theogonies.” It credits humans with a high degree of rational thought.

Secondly, the mythos mentions how they constructed cult-statues (ἁγάλματα) for the gods. This not only means that the humans have postulated what the gods must look like (presumably themselves), but also that they have notions about how to worship them and ideas about what pleases and displeases these divine beings (εὐσέβεια). After the birth of theology, humans next proceed to develop speech – a feat that goes well beyond mere mechanical know-how. In fact, it is not until the last item of the series that humankind shows what can properly be called the “demiourgic skill,” when they invent dwellings, clothes, footwear, bedding and procure sustenance. And even this last invention shows unexpected intelligence. For, when Protagoras says they procured τὰς ἐκ γῆς τροφάς, he appears to indicate that they bypassed the hunting-and-gathering stage and immediately invented agriculture.

Not only have humans developed skills common to all humanity, but have also invented specialized crafts. Later in the myth, when Zeus dispatches Hermes to distribute justice and shame among mortals, Hermes asks if he should distribute them as the τέχναι have been distributed, which have been distributed unevenly, so that one person who knows medicine can

¹⁶² The phrase is parallel to *Prt.* 322a4: διὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ συγγένειαν. It is interesting that Prodicus sees humans theorizing on a basis of benefit, while Protagoras does not. Was this a point of disagreement between them?

¹⁶³ DK 88 B25. The spirit, however, is hard to gauge, since the view is expressed in a satyr play, the *Sisyphus*. For the Euripidean authorship of the fragment, see Dihle 1977: 28-42.

be of service to many others (εἷς ἔχων ἰατρικὴν πολλοῖς ἱκανὸς ἰδιώταις) (322c6-7). Thus the audience learns (belatedly) that certain humans have also developed specialized crafts such as medicine.

Therefore, the intelligence that the humans immediately demonstrate is more than skill and craftsmanship. It is an intellectual αὐτάρκεια (autarky or self-sufficiency) that allows them to meet all their needs and wants, from food and clothing to religion and language.

4.1.3 Intellectual Autarky

Their intellectual autarky is also illustrated in the solitary life they lead. Other fifth-century reconstructions of primitive humanity emphasize the gradual process in the development of human ingenuity and the importance of community in that development. The account found in the opening chapters of Diodorus' history portrays humans, even after the discovery of fire, developing the crafts only gradually (κατὰ μικρόν) and formulating language in the same way (ἐκ τοῦ κατ' ὀλίγον).¹⁶⁴ This last point especially contrasts with Protagoras' conception of a quick development of language (ταχὺ διηρθρώσατο) (322a6). More importantly, the Diodoran cosmology credits humans' technological development to the foundation of cities, which is *prima facie* more believable. Protagoras, on the other hand, has his primitive humans develop most of the trappings of polis-life while still solitary, before there are actually poleis.

This view of their solitary lifestyle has been challenged for the very reason that it seems incredible that they could do so before interacting with each other. Interpreting the word σποράδην at 322b1, Taylor believes small groups are meant and that "there is no suggestion that

¹⁶⁴ D. S. 1.8 (= DK 68 B5.1). On the provenance of the Diodoran cosmology, the consensus appears to be that it reflects fifth-century thought. Kerferd 1981: 141 regards the account as an amalgam of fifth-century theorizing, while Thomas Cole defends the position earlier taken by Reinhardt (1912: 492-513) and argues that it derives from Democritus via the *Aegyptiaca* of Hecataeus of Abdera. The consensus view is challenged by Spoerri, who argues that it belongs closer to Diodorus' time. See Burton 1972: 44-51 for a comparison of Cole's and Spoerri's views.

in the pre-political phase men lived as isolated individuals.”¹⁶⁵ He therefore interprets this phase of human existence as organized in family units. However, this interpretation means that Protagoras is wasting his breath. He decided to tell the mythos in order to explain the origin of virtue. If he begins his discussion of humankind at the stage of the family unit, he has dodged the question altogether (cf. subsection 3.1.2)! It is therefore better to understand humans as living as isolated individuals. And, *pace* Taylor, there are suggestions that this is indeed the case. In their scattered existence the humans are devoured by beasts. If we are to imagine family units, why do the beasts have the upper hand? Surely a family can protect itself from a bear, lion or a pack of wolves. Also, Zeus becomes afraid that the entire race will become extinct (322c1). This is clear enough indication that, though Protagoras probably envisions his humans practising reproduction, he does not envision stable family units.

The humans then live in solitude. But one can, *cum* Taylor, feel surprise at the fact that Protagoras dates the nearly complete realization of human intelligence to before the foundation of cities. It is a very unique feature of Protagoras’ mythos, as, again, comparison with other reconstructions illustrates. For instance, Aeschylus’ Prometheus comments that mortals naturally live in groups, since even at the stage when they were like shapes of dreams (ὄνειράτων/ἀλίγκιοι μορφαῖσι) (448-9), they lived in underground caves like “light-as-air ants” (ἀήσυροι/μύρμηκες) (452). Similarly, the Hesiodic scholia of Johannes Tzetzes contain the summary of an account of the origin of human society which Diels and Kranz have connected with Democritus (DK 68 B5.3). In this summary humans are considered at the earliest stage to be cultivators of φιλαλληλία. Also, Sophocles’ “Ode to Man” implies that humans developed speech (φθέγμα) and civilized behavior (ἄστυνόμους ὀργάς) as parts of the same process (*Ant.* 354) and the tragic

¹⁶⁵ 1991: 84-85.

playwright Moschion describes the raising of cities as the result of Prometheus' gift.¹⁶⁶ Lastly, the Diodoran account, while similar to the Protagorean inasmuch as the ferocity of the beasts brings humans together, is quite dissimilar in that this original union succeeds from the start because they realize cooperation is in their interests (ὕπὸ τοῦ συμφέροντος διδασκομένους) (D. S. 1.8.2 = DK 68 B5.1).¹⁶⁷

In short, other versions of early society either assume humans are by nature social (the Tzetzes scholion) or see it as a product of, or corollary to, human intelligence (Sophocles, Moschion, Diodorus). Protagoras stands alone in imputing to humans so much intelligence before actually coming together in communal life. This difference between them allows one to gauge just how much intellectual autarky Protagoras attributes to his humans.

4.1.4 An Uncompromising Autarky

Why do Protagoras' humans thus counter-intuitively reach so high a stage of development in isolation from their fellow creatures? Because, I suggest, he is making a crucial point about human nature. Humans are not by nature characterized by mutual attraction (φιλαλληλία), as the Tzetzes scholion declares, but are solitary. While they have the intelligence to build cities, they don't. The reason is because they actually prefer not to; they prefer solitary life. This idea is borne out by their behavior in the first experiments at cohabitation. Because they fell victim to the wild beasts, they came together for mutual defense. Here the Diodoran account leaves it. Humans came together, saw it was to their benefit and lived happily ever after. Not so Protagoras' humans. Instead, they commit repeated injustices against each other (ἡδίκουν)

¹⁶⁶ For the fragment and discussion, see Xanthakis-Karamanos 1981: 410-417.

¹⁶⁷ Both in its description of the origin of language, as discussed above, and in this explanation of human cohabitation as motivated by the expedient, the Diodoran account appears to be reacting to the Protagorean account, or vice versa. Cf. subsection 4.1.3, fn. 164.

(322b7) – an idea not particularly unique in reconstructions of primitive life. What is unique, though, is the result. Because of the injustices, they scatter again individually and perish (πάλιν σκεδαννόμενοι διεφθείροντο) because they once again begin to fall victim to the wild beasts, *and not to each other*. The humans prefer to die by the beasts than be wronged by their fellow humans. Humankind is uncompromising and in a sense asocial, and it is its intellectual autarky that enables it to be so. Protagoras then endows his humans with so much intelligence before the rise of cities in order to make the fundamental point that humankind's autarky renders it uncompromising and autonomous.

Two consequences on Protagoras' version of the origin of society result from this assessment of human nature as intellectually self-sufficient, but uncompromising. First, it is incompatible with such positions as that advocated by Thrasymachus in *Republic* I. Thrasymachus maintains that justice is the interests of the stronger, whether the stronger is a democratic body or an individual tyrant (338e1-339a9). By Protagoras' reckoning, such is human nature that a stronger would never have emerged. His early humans prefer death by mauling to suffering any diminution of their autonomy or imposition on their autarky.

Secondly, if human society succeeds, it will not be the product of human intelligence. Protagoras' human is no πολιτικὸν ζῷον. He can come together with others, but because of ἀδικία he prefers to return to isolation and perish in the jaws of a beast than to compromise his autarky.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, a contract of the kind Döring suggests (subsection 3.1.2, 4.3.3) would benefit him; and he certainly has the intelligence to see where his interests lie and that compromise would save him. But he nonetheless refuses to cohabitate. And this, I suggest, is Protagoras' point. His commitment to his intellectual autarky is so strong that it overrides logical

¹⁶⁸ Rich 1956: 27-38, in discussing the Cynic conception of autarky, points out clearly the inherent incompatibility between autarky and living in a community.

considerations of interest and advantage. He is thus in a basic sense ἀκρατής.¹⁶⁹ Zeus' gift of justice and shame has been regarded as the foundation of Protagorean egalitarianism.¹⁷⁰ But, in light of the fact that his early humans prefer isolation to any diminution of their intellectual autarky, that egalitarianism appears to predate Zeus' gift by quite a long time, since Protagoras' human does not regard any other human to have a right to restrict his movements. He is from the beginning egalitarian to a fault.

4.2 HUMAN SOCIETY

This failure of human intelligence puts Protagoras' mortals in a desperate position. If their intelligence will not produce society, what hope do they have? The answer is the same as for the animal kingdom: natural selection. That is why so much attention and detail had been given to Epimetheus and the animals. It laid the groundwork and introduced the basic principle in the formation of human social and moral life.

4.2.1 The Origin of Law

Protagoras says human society kept failing because the humans kept committing injustices against each other (ἡδίκουν ἀλλήλους) (322b7). The word choice is surprising, as Zeus has not yet bestowed on humanity justice (δίκη) and shame (αἰδώς). So, technically speaking, they cannot commit an injustice. However, the word choice is likely to be deliberate, since it is difficult to believe Protagoras casually uses a word for an idea whose origin he is currently

¹⁶⁹ It is interesting that later in the dialogue Socrates introduces a discussion of ἀκρασία in which he not only doubts it as a true phenomenon, but secures Protagoras' agreement to the doubt (353a4-6). Has Plato through Socrates made Protagoras contradict himself?

¹⁷⁰ So, most recently, Balot 2006: 74-78.

explaining. One might circumvent this problem by diluting the word so as to mean harm, a meaning attested for the verb.¹⁷¹ But again what kind of harm? It is noteworthy that there is no violence in these early experiments. When they fall foul of each other, they simply part ways. There is no Cain to strike down an Abel. This absence of violence is possibly related to the absence of war. Protagoras explains that the humans individually are powerless against the beasts because protection requires the art of war, but the art of war is the one τέχνη that is impossible before the emergence of cities (322b5). So the question remains: How can they be said to “wrong” each other before Zeus actually gives them law?

The answer is that there is a law – of sorts. As detailed above, the humans have invented the necessities of life (clothes, shoes, bedding), have developed skills common to all humanity (agriculture, language), have deep thoughts (theology) and have invented specialized skills (e.g. medicine). Now, these capabilities serve the mortals in the same way that the powers (δυνάμεις) serve the animals. For, when Epimetheus ran out of powers to give the humans, Prometheus found them in the workshop of Hephaestus and Athena. Remembering this analogy helps clarify the problem. Concerning the animal powers Protagoras makes a point of implying that they are animal νόμοι.¹⁷² For, in the short passage that describes Epimetheus’ distribution of the powers to the animals (320c8-321c6) a form of νέμω is used seven times, while the process itself is called a νομή.¹⁷³ This identification of the animal powers as νόμοι, in addition to the parallelism between the animal powers and the human τέχναι, suggests that the human τέχναι too are νόμοι. Considering the wide semantic range νόμος had, this identification is not surprising. Protagoras’ humans have many institutions (e.g. religion, farming, demiourgic crafts) that involve specific

¹⁷¹ LSJ s. v. ἀδικέω II.2.

¹⁷² For the use of νόμος for animal behavior, see Ostwald 1969: 21-22.

¹⁷³ See [Ps]-Pl. *Min.* 317d3-318a7 for another argument based on the etymology of νόμος from νέμω. Modern lexicography agrees with the ancient etymology (Ostwald 1969: 9).

procedures that can be considered νόμοι. Moreover, this identification of the human τέχνη as νόμοι is given added confirmation when Hermes, asking Zeus how he should give justice and shame to mortals, not only comments that the τέχνη have been “distributed” (νενέμνται), but uses the verb νέμω four times in four lines (322c5-d1). Hermes takes the τέχνη to be νόμοι. This being the case, if Protagoras’ humans already have νόμοι, an interesting consequence follows. The humans being solitary, each of them will then have his (and her?)¹⁷⁴ own set of νόμοι. They are, quite literally, a law each unto himself.

This being the case, a major implication about how Protagoras conceptualized law, and so morality, follows. At its root it is the way of life the individual developed in isolation from other humans. In one sense this way of life is descriptive, as it merely denotes the customs and practices the individual used in, for example, worshipping the gods, speaking, or farming. But since these practices presuppose an examination and interpretation of the *natura rerum* on the part of the individual and so reflect his assessment of that reality, which inevitably produces a sense of obligation, there is also a normative aspect to his way of life. He does what he does because he believes it *ought* to be done that way. Thus the origin of law, especially from the perspective inherent in the word νόμος, is located by Protagoras in the assessment of reality by the human individual.

4.2.2 The Humans as Measures: Epistemological Autarky

Therefore, when Protagoras describes the difficulties the humans faced in coming together in a community as ἀδικία, he is being literal. Every time they tried to congregate, one committed

¹⁷⁴ So one would think. Cf. subsection 4.3.4 where Protagoras includes women in his list of those who could prove out of step with the moral environment, and subsection 4.1.3 where I conclude that reproduction was not followed by a lasting family relationship. For the consistency of such ideas on the rights and position of women with sophistic thought in general, see Kerferd 1981: 159-162.

what to another was an injustice. Klaus Döring has a similar interpretation of the problem that drove humans apart:

Solange für jeden einzelnen allein das gerecht war, was ihm als soches erschien, und er sich mithin berechtigt fühlte, demgemäß zu handeln, waren ständige Überschneidungen des Rechtes des einen mit dem des anderen und damit ständige Übergriffe und Gewalttätigkeiten die notwendige Folge.¹⁷⁵

In other words, each individual was his own measure of right and wrong. My interpretation of the intelligence, autarky and uncompromisingness of Protagoras' first humans, as well as my analysis of human τέχνη which result from their intellectual autarky as νόμοι, suggests that this assessment by Döring is broadly correct (without of course the *Übergriffe* and *Gewalttätigkeiten*), and that the human-measure claim is to be seen as the reason why the humans' first experiments at community at first failed. Discrepant beliefs, opinions, views and practices made concerted action and community impossible. In this way, then, Protagoras' relativism serves as the conceptual starting-point for his theory of human society and morality.

The question now becomes how the humans in the course of these failures to cohabitate finally succeeded. Döring finds the secret to their success in a social contract. I think this is unlikely. For, not only does a social contract imply that Protagoras' relativism has little or no relevance for a working society (cf. subsection 3.1.2), but also the picture Protagoras draws of the first humans tells against contractualism. As discussed above, this picture is quite unique. The humans are intelligent, so they can develop practices and institutions that can be called νόμοι. They do not need cities or interaction with others to develop these νόμοι. Moreover, since they are isolated, these νόμοι will show great variety. Indeed, they will be *quot homines*, and any attempt at union will inevitably end in conflict of νόμοι. However, since they are intellectually

¹⁷⁵ 1981: 111.

self-sufficient and uncompromising beings, “private worlds,”¹⁷⁶ no degree of intelligence will succeed in founding cities. In the terms of the mythos, Prometheus cannot approach Zeus’ acropolis. Their autarky likewise precludes union by force of arms. Until cities are founded, they are all on equal terms, with equal powers. They always prefer to withdraw than submit to another. In short, Protagoras’ unique assessment of the first humans is drawn in such a way as to preclude the possibility of any rationalistic theory of human society and morality such as contractualism requires. Protagoras’ humans simply do not act with an eye on interest and advantage, but act rather at their own discretion and judgment. A rationalist means of success being thus incompatible with this epistemological autarky of Protagoras’ humans, the remaining option is a biological one.

4.3 SUCCESS

4.3.1 Union by Accidental Matching

How then do Protagoras’ humans achieve success in cohabitation? Since Protagoras has shown that humans were already intelligent, had developed many, if not most, of the pre-conditions of civilization (the art of war is an obvious exception), but failed to cohere and cohabit for the single reason that they each had an individual way of life and worldview that they would not compromise (which ironically is a result of their having developed civilization *in nuce*), to make community work does not require any new, superadded information. It does not require any enlightenment regarding the truth or correction regarding moral practices (cf. *Tht.* 166e4-167a3). They were succeeding well enough at survival but for the beasts. All that was needed was union.

¹⁷⁶ To borrow a phrase from Taylor 1937: 326 used to describe Protagorean relativism (cf. Burnyeat 1976: 182).

In order therefore to enable their individual and independent assessments of reality to coexist what was needed was the right combinations, a process that grouped like with like.

This is in fact what Zeus says they needed. Fearing their extinction, he sent δίκη and αἰδώς “in order that there might be configurations of cities and encompassing bonds of friendship” (ἵν’ εἶεν πόλεων κόσμοι τε καὶ δεσμοὶ φιλίας συναγωγοί) (322c2-3). Whatever δίκη and αἰδώς are (and it is not quite clear yet), they are sent to earth for the sole purpose of bringing humans together in order and harmony. For, this passage is noteworthy for the secularism of Zeus. He simply wants men to survive. He is not outraged at any lawlessness on their part, nor does he consider them to be perpetrating any evil, nor again is he disgusted at any shameless acts. His only concern is that they should band together. And if they failed to do so and perished, so what? The biological world will go on. True, Zeus is said to fear for them, but the fact that *why* he fears for them is never explained once again implies that he is just an impersonal force, the principle of survival cropping up again (as in the natural selection of the animal kingdom and in the survival by necessity represented by Prometheus’ gift). Moreover, Protagoras adds the detail that he sent Hermes to deliver the gift, instead of having Zeus bestow it directly or send Iris who, Denyer aptly comments, would not have carried, as Hermes does, connotations of deceit and trickery.¹⁷⁷ But besides being the god of trickery and lies, Hermes is also the god of accident and dumb luck. By making Hermes the deliverer, Protagoras can insinuate that the “gift” he bestows is truly a windfall (ἔρμαιον).

Finally, the phrase ἵν’ εἶεν πόλεων κόσμοι τε καὶ δεσμοὶ φιλίας συναγωγοί is itself arresting for several reasons. First, beginning with δεσμοί, the line is the complete second half of a dactylic hexameter after the third foot caesura. Secondly, the emphasis on union (συναγωγοί coupled with φιλίας is somewhat redundant) stresses the fact, already brought up in the person of

¹⁷⁷ 2008: 108.

Zeus, that it is not moral enlightenment or correction that humans need, only union. Finally, that union is called friendship (φιλία). It is an intimate term, compared with, e.g., κοινωνία. In fine, Protagoras wants to draw attention to this line in which he stresses the fact that all that humans needed was a mechanism for intimate union. They had morality already – many versions of it, in fact. The question was how they were going to coordinate these conflicting versions and create intimate unions. In sum, Zeus’ observation stresses the need for mere union and implies it will be an intimate, but accidental one effected by configuration (κόσμος), not revelation.

4.3.2 Natural Law

Union is brought about, in the terms of the myth, by the delivery of δίκη and αἰδώς. When Hermes asks how he is to give it, Zeus replies that he is to distribute it to all. All are to have a piece of justice and shame. If only a few were to receive a piece as it was handed out, cities would never emerge. As a matter of fact, if anybody will not be able to possess a portion of them, he is to be killed as a disease of the city (322d1-5). These words at least make it clear what the bestowment of δίκη and αἰδώς is not. It is not the discovery (or invention) of eternal truths.

First of all, Protagoras never specifies the content of justice and shame. But if the point of the mythos were that humankind discovered that X was just and Y was shameful according to some standard, then he would certainly have needed to make that clear. But besides thus arguing from silence, one can notice that, when Protagoras has Zeus declare that if a few people were to receive shares in justice and shame, cities would never emerge, he thereby removes the possibility of a “natural law” interpretation, since ancient theories that sought a source of human law in divine law typically made use of the πρῶτος εὐρετής model. For instance, in the pseudo-Platonic dialogue *Minos*, it is argued that the Spartans enjoy excellent laws because they derived

them from Cretan law which ultimately came from Zeus through the legendary king Minos.¹⁷⁸ If cities will not emerge if a few share in justice and shame, then all must. If all must, then it is difficult to base Protagoras' morality on transcendental truths.

There is a further suggestion later in the dialogue that natural law does not figure in the mythos. Beginning the logos portion of his speech, Protagoras tells Socrates to imagine that there is one thing – what it is does not yet matter – that everybody must have in order for there to be cities. He then asks Socrates how, if the older generation did not teach this certain thing to the younger generation, people could become good (σκέψαι ὥς θαυμασίως γίνονται οἱ ἀγαθοί) (325b3-4). Protagoras here makes it clear that, if goodness is not taught in a community, there will be no goodness. Δίκη καὶ αἰδώς thus cannot be sparks of the divine lodged in the human breast.

4.3.3 Social Contract Theories

The same information that precludes natural law also presents a problem for a social contract. If cities would never emerge if morality began as the preserve of a few, there is consequently no group to instruct the masses on how to live. Alternatively, the author of the *Sisyphus*, as well as Glaucon in the second book of the *Republic*, gives the impression that a contract was struck by mutual agreement between all the members of the community.¹⁷⁹ But certain pieces of information Protagoras has dropped in the course of the mythos suggest that such a mutual agreement was highly unlikely. The essence of the social contract is that the potential members of a community realize they must no longer behave in their own individual interests, but for the interests of the whole body, whether these interests are security in a Hobbesian model or

¹⁷⁸ 318c4-321d10. For a treatment of the dialogue as representative of thought peculiar to the fourth-century BC, despite its non-Platonic authorship, see Strauss 1968: 66-75.

¹⁷⁹ For the *Sisyphus* fragment, see DK 88 B25 and above, fn. 163. For Glaucon, see Pl. *Rep.* 358e3-359b5.

property in a Lockian or pleasure in a Benthamite. The interests of the sum are now the ethical criteria of the parts. Contractualism thus has for a primary precondition sheer intelligence, if not mere common sense. The myth, however, characterizes humankind as very intelligent, yet failing repeatedly to cohere in a political body. In other words, Protagoras points out that the humans had the necessary precondition for the social contract, intelligence; but that that intelligence was simply not enough. If human society were a set of stipulations, then humans would have figured it out at the same time as they developed religion, language, agriculture and medicine. The fact of the matter is that the humans' strong sense of autonomy and autarky overrode their intelligence on this point. They would not cohere in such a pact, because they would not brook any imposition on their individual νόμοι. It is thus implied that if they are to cohere in one body, the "ties that bind" must be rooted on a deeper, more intimate level. Zeus demands bonds of *friendship* (φιλίας), not a business-like pact (συνθήκη, κοινωνία).

Moreover, there are broader reasons for rejecting the bestowment of justice and shame as the emergence of a social compact. In a brief, but penetrating study of the social contract theory in antiquity, Charles Kahn determines that the essential features of its historical development are 1) an original "state of nature" 2) a principle of insecurity that makes organized society desirable or inevitable 3) the deliberate striking of the compact.¹⁸⁰ Protagoras' mythos does not satisfy these conditions very well. As for an original "state of nature," in the course of his argument Kahn shows that every ancient version construes the original state of nature in Hobbesian terms: Humans are in the beginning exceptionally violent towards one another.¹⁸¹ As noted above, Protagoras' humans are rather disinterested in each other. They do commit injustices against each other, but their disagreements never descend into war or violence. They simply part ways.

¹⁸⁰ 1981: 93.

¹⁸¹ 97-101.

The mythos does satisfy the second condition, but compared with other ancient versions, it becomes clear that Protagoras is minimizing the desirability of organized society. As Kahn points out, organized society is desirable because the incentives are so great: the development of the “civilized arts.”¹⁸² Protagoras’ humans have already worked these out individually. The only incentive to congregate is defense against the beasts. Finally, as mentioned above, Protagoras’ humans do not come together by deliberate agreement, as the ancient versions typically require.¹⁸³ The intelligence of Protagoras’ humans fails them on this score.

Guthrie offers an interpretation of the mythos as a social contract that attempts to circumvent this failure of human intelligence. He suggests that by an evolutionary process sporadic groups of humans came together. Then, on the principle of “survival of the fittest,” the individuals who learned the lesson of contractualism survived, while those that failed to learn it perished.¹⁸⁴ This is an interesting idea. Although Guthrie’s argument for contractualism is on the whole undermined by the reasons so far discussed, his suggestion that a process of selection is at work recalls the Empedoclean influences discussed earlier and likely points in the right direction.

4.3.4 Agreement by Natural Selection

To recapitulate, the mythos makes it clear that in order to survive the humans need union, not because they are not violent or wicked, but because, as I argued above, each individual is his own standard; or, in Protagorean terms, his own measure. And this disparity of standards causes them to fall foul of each other in a scenario Protagoras’ call ἀδικία (thereby implying his definition of injustice as the clash of two or more different standards). Consequently, the much needed union between these self-sufficient, uncompromising entities can only come about *by*

¹⁸² 96.

¹⁸³ 93, 99.

¹⁸⁴ 1957: 92. Cf. Guthrie 1971: 136-137.

genuine agreement. The individuals must somehow genuinely come to share the same standards. And when at the climax of the mythos Hermes comes from Zeus to deliver δίκη and αἰδώς to mortals, it is this type of genuine agreement that is delivered, as is seen in the language of the delivery and in its accidental, fortuitous nature.

First, when told by Zeus to deliver δίκη and αἰδώς, Hermes asks if he is to *deposit* (θῶ) it as the property of a few. The answer from Zeus is no. He is instead to divide it among everybody (ἐπὶ πάντας [sc. νεῖμον]). The image is that of a single object divided and distributed so that all may have a piece (πάντες μετεχόντων), and the use of ἐπί instead of the dative stresses the idea of dissemination. Thus, they all then have a piece of the same object. They are united insofar as they each have a piece; and in genuine agreement, since they each have a piece of the same thing. In other words, the delivery and division of δίκη and αἰδώς does not signify the time when humans developed a moral conscience. How could it be? As Protagoras implies when he remarks that the first attempts at community ended in ἀδικία, there already existed morality in its basic sense (i. e. the individual's assessment of reality). Rather, it signifies an ordering of that moral universe into population pockets of genuine union and agreement. Thus, the will of Zeus is fulfilled and the original purpose of sending δίκη and αἰδώς served, which had been ἵν' εἶεν πόλεων κόσμοι τε καὶ δεσμοὶ φιλίας συναγωγοί (322c2-3).

The way in which the union and agreement come about supports this idea of a genuine agreement. Specifically, there is a strong suggestion that it is the result of pure accident. First, the account preserved in Diodorus again provides an instructive contrast. It says that humans first came together in order to help each other against the onslaught of the beasts, taught to do so by a consideration of what was expedient to them (ὕπὸ τοῦ συμφέροντος διδασκομένους) (DK 68 B5.1, p. 135, vv. 36-7). Protagoras' humans, by contrast, fail to realize their own expediency and

instead scatter and perish. Protagoras' language here, with the present participle and imperfect tense, suggests a long, repetitious series (σκεδαννόμενοι διεφθείροντο) (322b8). So, they not only fail to realize what is beneficial to them, but do so repeatedly. This failure is surprising, since Protagoras' humans are so much more intelligent and accomplished than the Diodoran humans. Thus, by drawing attention to the fact that humans not only failed, but continued to fail to establish union, Protagoras stresses the fact that agreement (when it was actually achieved) was not the product of their ingenuity, but fortuitous.

Secondly, the fortuitousness of original human agreement is indicated by the one law Zeus lays down for humanity: The humans are to kill anybody who is not able to possess a piece of justice and shame (τὸν μὴ δυνάμενον αἰδοῦς καὶ δίκης μετέχειν) *in the conviction that* (ὥς) such a person is a disease of the city (νόσον πόλεως) (322d4-5). If the agreement that these mortals make were deliberate and designed for the sake of self-interest, then this “odd man out” must be somebody who refused to abide by the agreement. In other words, his recalcitrance in that case would be a matter of will. Protagoras, however, makes a point of saying that his recalcitrance is a matter of capacity (τὸν μὴ δυνάμενον). This suggests that he is constitutionally unable to abide by the agreement in question. Protagoras then is either making provision for a sociopath in his mythos (*a priori* unlikely) or subtly indicating the nature of original society as a sincere and genuine agreement. Those who congregate do so because they genuinely see eye to eye; those who fail to do so, fail because they genuinely *cannot*.

Protagoras has more to say later on this odd man out. In the later, developed city any man, woman or child who fails to live in accordance with δικαιοσύνη, σωφροσύνη and ὁσιότης are to be taught and/or punished. If he or she proves unable to show these virtues they are to be removed by expulsion or execution (324e2-325b1). Again, non-conformity is not a matter of

volition, but of capacity, as the offending person is said to be irremediable (ἀνίατος). However, the person is not *in truth* irremediable. As the particle ὥς twice indicates, the citizens are merely *to regard* him as such (ὥς νόσον πόλεως [322d5]; ὥς ἀνίατον ὄντα [325a8]). Besides, Protagoras has already assumed that virtue is teachable (subsection 3.2.1). This odd man out is not one who fails to live in civilization, but to live in a certain *kind* of civilization. And he fails not because he refuses, but because he is genuinely unable, to live in that brand of civilization. His outlook is constitutionally different.

This does not mean that this non-conformist will forever be an outcast, but rather, since success in the formation of a society is a long, drawn-out process, involving repetition and false starts described through the imperfects σκεδαννύμενοι διεφθείροντο (322b8), one should imagine that individuals keep trying to combine with others until they find those with whom they naturally agree. Finally, this idea of a fortuitous agreement is consistent with the symbolism of the myth. Every other aspect of human culture and achievement was the result of human intelligence. They issued from human προμήθεια and so were provided by Prometheus. The agreement that produces society, however, is not deliberate or designed. It is fortuitous, a ἔρμαιον and accordingly delivered by Hermes.¹⁸⁵

4.4 CONCLUSION: ETHICALITIES

The picture of the origin of human society and morality that emerges from Protagoras' mythos is much more complex than it has in the past been taken. Premising his account on the intelligence

¹⁸⁵ Hermes assumes quite a deal of authority when he uses active θῶ; (Am I to establish justice and shame?) instead of the middle θῶμαι; (Am I to have justice and shame established?). And Zeus sanctions this authority when he uses similar language (θές) instead of θεῶ. This simply means, I suggest, that Zeus and Hermes are essentially aspects of the same idea, viz. original human agreement.

of the individual, he portrays that intelligence as being sufficient in and of itself for all the trappings and institutions of civilized life, but, paradoxically, he points to this very autarky which is the germ of civilization as the sole impediment to the individual's coming together in a stable society with others. At the heart of this uncompromising autarky lay, I argued, Protagorean relativism. The humans each live according to his own judgment and assessment of reality and the fact that they refuse to suffer any violation of that assessment, unlike Döring's contract, vindicates that relativism, since that stubbornness represents the basic incorrigibility of their individual assessments.

Relativism thus being the operative starting-point of his account, Protagoras explains how such creatures still, despite their uncompromisingness, came together. Rather than explaining how one global human morality was established in human history, Protagoras gives an account of how a plurality of moralities, or ethicalities, developed by a process of selection according to fitness that mirrors the Empedoclean natural selection in Epimetheus' compensatory distribution of powers in the animal kingdom. In a gradual process people who were independent assessors of reality repeatedly came into contact with each other. If their worldviews proved different, they fell foul of each other and parted; if they happened to be likeminded and to have the same worldview, they tended to stay together and to survive because their numbers and cooperation protected them against the beasts. The result was that stable communities began to develop and to dot the globe. Each of these communities did not have the same worldview, but rather each had its own ethicality, or intersubjective truth,¹⁸⁶ that ultimately derived from the individual's (and of those likeminded to him) unmediated intellectual response to the conditions of reality.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Mansfeld 1981: 49: "Whenever a plurality of persons agree, a common measure has arisen. This intersubjective truth is not independent of those who have agreed to it; it is only valid for them, i. e. only exists, as long as it is accepted."

Protagoras then does not give an account of a metaphysical goodness, but an account of various versions of goodness. Δίκη and αἰδώς then are nothing transcendental, but stand for the natural and fortuitous development of these ethicalities. This being the case, it is interesting to notice that Protagoras' mythos would then be quite consistent with the intellectual climate of the fifth-century BC. The invasions of the Persians and the growth of the Athenian Empire had thrown into relief the variant ethical traditions of different cultures and created an interest in ethnography and in the relationship between these ethical traditions. Protagoras can be regarded as having offered in his mythos an interpretation of this phenomenon.

4.4.1 Ὁμοδοξία?

Did Protagoras have another name for the development of these ethicalities other than the mythical/poetic δίκη and αἰδώς? In the *Clitophon* the dialogue's namesake complains to Socrates that for all his exhortations to cultivate justice Socrates has not once explained what the product (ἔργον) of justice is.¹⁸⁷ Clitophon goes on to tell how he once questioned Socrates' associates in an effort to learn from them this very lesson. But these fellows only spouted out Socratic platitudes. One of them, though, he thought had an interesting idea. He said that the specific product of justice was political friendship (φιλία ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν) (409d4-6). Asked whether he included the friendship of boys and animals under this heading, he answered a flat no and clarified what he meant by offering the more precise term "likemindedness" (ὁμόνοια) (409e4). Clitophon then asked whether he meant by ὁμόνοια a likeness of opinion (ὁμοδοξία) or knowledge (ἐπιστήμη). He emphatically disavowed likeness of opinion (ἡτίμαζεν), his reason being that cases of likeness of opinion between men necessarily prove to be numerous and

¹⁸⁷ For a recent discussion on the dialogue's authenticity, see Slings 1999: 227-234. He concludes with hesitation that it is genuine (234). Taylor 1926: 538 regarded it as the work of "some fourth-century Academic."

harmful (ἡναγκάζοντο γὰρ πολλὰ καὶ βλαβεραὶ γίνεσθαι ὁμοδοξίαι ἀνθρώπων) (409e6-7).

Thus he concludes that, since ὁμόνοια is a good thing, it must be ἐπιστήμη, not δόξα.

Clitophon's conversation with this associate of Socrates falls apart at this point, because it is felt to have become circular.

Though brief, this exchange is indeed interesting. Clitophon's interlocutor had offered φιλία and ὁμόνοια as the products of justice. In this he is faithfully reproducing the views of his teacher.¹⁸⁸ Then he is asked if he understands friendship (φιλία) and likemindedness (ὁμόνοια) to be ὁμοδοξία or ἐπιστήμη. Again being true to his teacher Socrates, he explains it must be the latter.¹⁸⁹ Be that as it may, it is interesting to note that Clitophon's question implies that there was a theory that equated friendship and likemindedness with ὁμοδοξία? If this is indeed the case, to whom could Clitophon be referring? It has been suggested that sophistic thought is lurking in the passage;¹⁹⁰ and Guthrie even specified Protagoras as the reference.¹⁹¹ Indeed, there is some reason for thinking Guthrie was right. The interlocutor's equation of justice with φιλία recalls the fact that in Protagoras' mythos Zeus is concerned that there be δεσμοὶ φιλίας συναγωγοί. Also, the interlocutor's rejection of ὁμοδοξία on the grounds that, being mere opinion, it entails a plurality and harm inconsistent with the inherent goodness of justice suggests that this ὁμοδοξία was associated with an idea of relativism which, I have argued, is represented in the mythos by the autarkic nature of the original humans.

Certainty in so brief a passage is impossible. But if Protagoras did explain the origin of human society and morality as the fortuitous meeting of likeminded individuals, as I suggest in this chapter he did, then ὁμοδοξία would describe it with an almost Prodician precision.

¹⁸⁸ At *Rep.* 351d Socrates makes the same assertion.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. *Prt.* 361a6-b7.

¹⁹⁰ Slings 1999: 193.

¹⁹¹ 1962-78: III. 149, 175.

5.0 Δίκη AND Αιδώς AS THE CONSENSUS OF THE POLIS

After telling his mythos, Protagoras gives two proofs, in what has been called the “rider” to the mythos, to demonstrate that what the point the mythos was meant to make is a fact, that everybody does in fact possess goodness (ἀρετή). According to the relativist interpretation I am proposing this claim is true because, every individual’s assessment of reality being veridical and incorrigible, what the individual judges to be good and bad (as well as right and wrong, honorable and shameful, etc.) will be good or bad for him. Thus, on a basic level every individual has virtue because his perceptions and judgments effectively create virtue for him. But Protagoras must also explain for Socrates how, if everybody has virtue, it can still be a thing taught (cf. subsection 3.2.1). The answer to this has actually already been hinted at. If in the mythos the creation of ethicalities, not a global morality, is depicted, then over the course of time there will arise the need for some mechanism or system by which one can be adapted to one of these ethicalities, it not being a given that those born later will have a disposition that will automatically square with the community’s outlook. This idea of adaptation and conformity was only hinted at in the mythos, though; Protagoras reserves its full elaboration for the logos that follows the “rider.”

However, before discussing the logos, it remains to be seen what the mythos and its creation of ethicalities means for Athenian-style democracy. If the first communities successfully coalesced because the autarky and autonomy of the first humans was not violated, but instead

came together in such a way that their autarky was represented through equality (ἰσονομία) and their autonomy through freedom (ἐλευθερία); though that kind of coalescence suggests a democratic origin, it does not necessarily follow that democracy *still* remains the preferable form of government, especially considering that its conceptual basis, relativism, implies that any form of government is just as good as any other, provided the polis believes it. In short, how can a relativistic account of the origin of human civilization *prescribe* democracy?

5.1 THE MYTHOS: DEMOCRACY PRESCRIBED

The political implications of the mythos are significant. When Protagoras describes the origin of human society, he is at the same time prescribing a behavior for contemporary governments. The origin of society being as the mythos portrays, it follows that the government that most closely approximates to the original formula and recipe of civilization is best, not in a dogmatic sense, but insofar as it conforms to the natural pattern and has a proven track-record of success. In Protagoras' day democracy came closest to the original formula. It represented freedom (ἐλευθερία), not just in a legal and political sense, but, as the citizen-body in casting its votes actually created Law, Right, Justice and Good, it was a freedom from dogma and from a tradition that interpreted worth and competence genetically. Democracy, however, looked beyond that tradition to the *incunabula* of human life. It corrected the wreck of the ages by asserting that by nature, biologically understood, every individual's judgment could produce an ethicality just as legitimate as any other's. Human equality was an epistemological fact. The government that recognized this fact by the enactment of political ἰσονομία would again be true to humanity's biological roots.

Democracy, in short, was a return. It restored human society to the way it ought to have been all along, but wasn't, because a sinister development, which some might call "tradition," intervened. Anthropologically speaking, then, democracy appears to be globally better. But how can a relativist insist that a certain form of government is globally better? There are two ways by which I suggest Protagoras argued for the global preferability of democracy within the framework of his relativist philosophy. The first is by an appeal to reason: Democracy is globally better because it is the one form of government that is consistent with its conceptual charter. The second is a moral claim: In the last analysis democracy is the means of arriving at the likeliest thing to be considered moral.

5.1.1 Consistency with the Founding Principle

In what sense can Protagoras, a relativist, claim that one form of government is "better" than another? Could not a government, construed in Hobbesian terms, be just as Protagorean as a democracy? For instance, if a body of citizens determined their powers were insufficient to regulate the community and decided jointly that large powers should be committed to one man, there would be government at least based on, if not operating by, consensus. "If oligarchy and monarchy seems [sic] just to the citizens of a polis, oligarchy or monarchy is just for them."¹⁹² While casual adherence to the human-measure claim might suggest this justification of monarchy or oligarchy is legitimate, at least to an extent, it still remains true that democracy, by operating regularly by consensus, is a more consistent application of the human-measure principle. According to Protagoras' model, other forms of government would then actually use consensus to cancel the principle of decision by consensus. Democracy, on the other hand, always observes

¹⁹² Keyt & Miller 2004: 308.

the rule. In this way, Protagoras' justification of democracy would then be an assertion that it is better than other forms of government by virtue of its logical consistency.

This mode of justifying democracy makes sense of Protagoras' refrain in the Great Speech. At the end of the mythos he summarizes its import by saying that the Athenians with good reason (εἰκότως) listen to every citizen when deliberating on matters touching on justice and self-control (322d5-323a4). He is referring to the mode of decision-making the Athenian democracy used, which in the dialogue stands for democracy itself. He draws the same conclusion in the middle of the rider to the mythos (323c3-5) and one last time at the end of the rider (324c5-d1). In all three passages it is the adverb εἰκότως that is used to describe their actions. It is not a moral or aesthetic idea; so he does not say καλῶς or εὖ. The Athenians are reasonable, they act *with reason*, because they behave consistently with the data provided in the mythos. If on the other hand the citizens unanimously agreed that there should be an oligarchy, they would in the same breath nullify agreement as a legitimate mode of decision-making because oligarchy would invalidate the rule that sanctioned it.

If Protagoras thought relativism was globally true (and Plato's refutation of it in the *Theaetetus* (166a2-179b9), as well as that of many others,¹⁹³ assumes he did); and if relativism was integral in human civilization, then Protagoras can fault other government forms as deviations from the historical and logical rule. Monarchy and oligarchy, though in one sense the "tradition" of Greece, cannot be legitimate. In other words, if morality is the genuine agreement of the members of the community on any given topic, then these government forms are lopsided in their imposition of the opinion of a single individual or the agreement (even if genuine) of oligarchs on the entire community.

¹⁹³ Chappell 1995: 333-338 has a brief summary of these refutations.

5.1.2 True Morality

Protagoras' formulation of human society addresses a problem concerning morality which was at the center of ethical discussions in the mid fifth century BC: What is the value of traditional legal, social and moral customs (νόμοι), if these customs, as can be demonstrated, differ from nation to nation and even, in the case of the Greeks themselves, from polis to polis? The *locus classicus* for this idea is provided by Herodotus (3.38). He relates how Darius once questioned Greeks and Indian Callatiae regarding their burial customs. He asked the former what price could compel them to follow the practice of the Callatiae and consume the bodies of their dead. The Greeks were appalled at the idea of this sort of cannibalism. He then asked the Callatiae if they could be compelled to follow the practice of the Greeks and burn their dead. They were likewise appalled at the idea of cremation. Herodotus tells this story in order to corroborate his opinion that, if one gave all men the option of choosing the best customs from all that exist, each person would, after careful examination, choose his own (3.38.1). This leads Herodotus to the conclusion that Pindar was right when he said that νόμος was king.¹⁹⁴ The multitude of human custom-laws which are various to the point of being contradictory, thus engaged the interest of Greek thinkers, many of whom, like Herodotus, despair of finding any rule to negotiate between them besides native preference.

Nor was the issue of fleeting interest. The author of the *Δίσσοι Λόγοι* repeats a version of the observation Herodotus makes and is clearly more aware of its value as an argument for relativism (2.18 & 26). Similarly, the author of the late fourth-century dialogue *Minos* finds an argument for relativism in the variety of human νόμοι (315a4-6). The variety of human νόμοι was thus a long-lasting problem pervading the Greek world. The fact alone that the three works

¹⁹⁴ For Herodotus' understanding of Pindar's statement, see Dodds 1959: 270.

mentioned were written in a different dialect (Ionic, Doric, Attic respectively) illustrates its pervasiveness.

Protagoras' mythos addresses this problem of the interrelationship of νόμοι. As the mythos explains, the original agreement that resulted in a local ethicality was organic. No party to it was obliged to compromise his personal assessment of right and wrong, but, on the contrary, was enabled to give expression to his personal assessment through the institution of that very local ethicality. The group ethicality was thus an amplification and extension of his own. Moreover, since Protagoras' objectivist relativism still recognized the true existence of the thing perceived and only maintained that that thing was vastly pluralistic, the νόμοι of the original group can be regarded by Protagoras as direct and unmediated expressions of that higher, but enigmatic, sphere of existence, which is best denoted by the word φύσις.¹⁹⁵ Thus, Protagoras might be said to have attempted to reconcile the apparent νόμος/φύσις contradiction. His relativism accounts for the variety of ethicalities, while keeping unsevered the cord between νόμοι and their transcendental base. This reconciliation has a price, though. It postulates a metaphysical universe without providing any precise definition of it. There is a physis-world, but what it looks like cannot be laid out in detail. It can be empirically observed, but not institutionalized. Protagoras was not just a theological agnostic (cf. subsection 2.1.2). Perhaps nothing can be said of that universe with absolute certainty; but, be that as it may, establishing a community that does not pervert the means of perceiving it inspires much greater confidence than one that does not.

¹⁹⁵ The distinction between νόμος and φύσις is datable as far as back as one Archelaus of Athens (or Miletus?) who taught τὸ δίκαιον εἶναι καὶ τὸ αἰσχρὸν οὐ φύσει, ἀλλὰ νόμῳ (D. L. 2.16-17 = DK 59 A1). If Ion of Chius is right in saying that Socrates studied under him (quoted in D. L. 2.23 [= DK 59 A3]), he will then belong to Protagoras' generation (for Protagoras' date of birth see subsection 7.1.1).

What makes this reconciliation of νόμος and φύσις morally meaningful is the assumption the mythos makes that the individual's assessment of reality is veridical and incorrigible. This is the essence of his formulation of human morality. The individual humans would not congregate with each other under any other terms except those that recognized their respective readings of reality. The ethicalities that finally formed did so because they acknowledged this rule, or rather because they were a collective manifestation of it. The group's νόμοι then are connected with a transcendental φύσις, but the content of that φύσις, in the final analysis, is what the individuals in the group determine it to be. In other words, if that φύσις ever has content, it does so only for the perceiver, whether the perceiver is an individual or group. It is therefore morally imperative that the government be an amplification of the individual's assessment. Otherwise, he stands disconnected from and at odds with the physis-world.

5.1.3 The State and the Individual

An interesting relationship results from this political application of the human-measure. The state and the individual are thus inextricably tied together. On the one hand, the individual does not, properly speaking, need the state for his personal intellectual development or for the realization of his humanity. As the mythos showed, the humans had invented almost everything needed for civilized life before coming together in cities. However, the state serves an important purpose for him. It removes the obstacles that stand in the way of that personal development. In the terms of the mythos these obstacles were the beasts. But, despite this function the state can perform, the human animal can only submit to communal life if the community respects the integrity of his own assessment of reality; otherwise, the connection with φύσις is lost. The state then is to be an

amplification, through combination with others, of the individual's own assessment of reality.

For Protagoras the state and the individual are ideally one and the same thing.

On the other hand, the "state" is reduced to the status of being merely the harmonized opinion of the individual citizens that compose it. It is not the organs or bodies designed to reach opinions, but the collective opinion that makes up those governmental organs. If then it is going to be the opinion of the city, it must incorporate *all* the citizens,¹⁹⁶ since a city is not the physical spaces, but the men who fill them.¹⁹⁷ Thus, while the individual and the state are identical, they are not indivisible. For, the moment they cease to be identical, division is imminent.¹⁹⁸ The state then for Protagoras is *all* the citizens; and if it is not, if there is disagreement and dissension, every effort must be made to restore or impart same-mindedness (ὁμόνοια) to the *whole* citizen-body (see chapter 10).

5.1.4 Conclusion: The Psychological Effect

These then are the ways I suggest Protagoras represented democracy in prescriptive, not just descriptive, terms. Since civilization emerged according to a consensual model, government by consensus and a harmonizing of opinion will preserve that original formula, and so preserve civilization. However, one might suggest that on the basis of relativism there is no real moral mandate to preserve civilization. To this Protagoras could respond that there very well was, that if there was going to be joint, concerted action (one might, I suppose, prefer to go off and die), the rectitude of that action, in light of the indefinable link between opinion and φύσις, depended on government by agreement.

¹⁹⁶ For the inclusion of women here see subsection 4.1.3 and 4.3.4.

¹⁹⁷ This definition of the city was current at the time. See Th. 1.143.5, 7.77.7; S. *OT*. 56-57.

¹⁹⁸ If Protagoras went further and even said "justified," he has anticipated arguments for disobedience and rebellion by centuries.

In addition to these reasons, the idea that democracy is a return to “the original and right way of doing things” and a rectification of the intervening centuries has inherent in it a stirring psychological effect, one that is comparable to a restoration of a golden age and that is likely to fill its followers with a spirit not unlike the one that celebrated Athens in stone, bronze, and speech as the pinnacle of human civilization. It is interesting to wonder if Protagoras’ thinking did not contribute in some way to that energetic and creative *Zeitgeist* of Periclean Athens.

5.2 THE LOGOS: INTRODUCTION

On the theoretical foundation provided by the mythos, Protagoras uses a logos to give an account of the practical implications of his theory. The logos is thus dedicated to an explanation of how the compromise-free origin of society can be perpetuated in the actual workings of a democratic government. His answer is, in word, consensus. Decision-making by consensus observes and acknowledges the fact of the individual’s biological and existential freedom and equality. It recognizes that the individual is, in the words of Plato when describing Protagoras’ philosophy, intellectually self-sufficient (αὐτάρκης εἰς φρόνησιν).¹⁹⁹ But the consensus must be genuine and must embrace the entire city, because a great deal is at stake. Indeed, as discussed above (subsection 5.1.2), nothing less than morality is at stake, everything that the city denotes in and between the terms δίκη and αἰδώς. Thus, just as in the mythos δίκη and αἰδώς signified the first occurrence of genuine agreement, so in the logos they will represent the continuance of genuine concord and government by the consensus of the entire city.

But on the practical level, genuine consensus appears to be a highly impracticable mode of government. Bring just a handful of people together and *quot homines tot sententiae*. One

¹⁹⁹ *Tht.* 169d5.

would think disagreement is the rule in human cooperation, not the exception. The question naturally arises: How is government by consensus feasible among so many self-sufficient entities? If the human-measure is a political statement, it would seem to give a recipe for political chaos. While this idea might well inform anti-democratic depictions of the Athenian Assembly at work,²⁰⁰ Protagoras, I will argue, had an answer based on a sociological analysis of the polis: The community has coercive mechanisms in place to predispose its members to a certain outlook. However, this societal predisposition does not eliminate the possibility of making wrong decisions. Contrary to what Socrates might think, there *is* a need for a teacher in a government by consensus. These are the two issues that Protagoras addresses in the logos.

5.3 THE FEASIBILITY OF GENUINE CONSENSUS

Granted that the tiny nucleus came together by genuine concord and coincidence of opinion, as time progresses one would think that the community would reach a size where the opinions of its members would be too multiple and discrepant for any consensus, much less genuine consensus, to survive. Protagoras' response is to deny that this would happen. On the contrary, an empirical assessment of the community's institutions indicates that the citizens' opinions never become very discrepant at all. The original *ὁμοδοξία* is passed on.

5.3.1 The Logos: Its Use and Structure

The change from a *mythos* to a *logos* is a quintessentially sophistic and un-Platonic trait. In a recent article, R. Fowler compares the sophistic use of *mythos* and *logos* and the Platonic use.

²⁰⁰ E. g. Xenophon's coverage of the trial of the generals responsible for the victory (!) off the Arginusae islands (*Hell.* 1.7).

For Plato, mythos transmitted information and ideas that could not be transmitted by logos, although ideally speaking logos should be able to express them; it is the problematic of human epistemology that it cannot.²⁰¹ The sophists, on the other hand, regarded both mythos and logos as equally valuable transmitters of ideas, not because both could be vehicles of metaphysical truths, but because both, logos and mythos, contain dubious knowledge, since Truth for them was either relative, subjective or non-existent (depending on the sophist).²⁰² This attitude of the sophists towards mythos often shows itself in an indifference in the choice between the two. As Protagoras says before his speech, it does not matter to him whether he uses mythos or logos to convey his ideas (320c2-4). When therefore Plato has Protagoras change from narrating by mythos to arguing by logos, he is continuing his portrait of the sophist, not making Protagoras' ideas conform to his mode of expression.

In terms of structure, the logos is a response to Socrates' second concern: If ἀρετή is taught, why don't men who excel at it pass it on to their sons? On a deeper level, though, it is Protagoras' response to the second horn of the dilemma Socrates put him in. As discussed above (section 2.0), Socrates objections to Protagoras' assumption that virtue is a thing taught were rhetorically constructed. If virtue is a thing taught, Socrates says, then the Athenians, wise people, are wrong to think that it isn't; and if it could be taught, excellent fathers would pass it on to their sons. Protagoras' mythos responded to the first horn. Protagoras maintains that the Athenians are right, it is not taught (in a sense [see section 5.0]). In another sense, however, it must be a thing taught; otherwise, Protagoras, a teacher of virtue (which he calls εὐβουλία), is a charlatan and a phoney. Thus, according to the dialogue's structure, the logos will explain the

²⁰¹ Fowler 2011: 64.

²⁰² Ibid. 58-59.

teachability, not the acquisition (*pace* the educational group [subsections 1.3.1 & 1.4.1]), of virtue.

In general, Protagoras's logos lays out the details of a societal education. There is independent evidence outside of Plato that Protagoras theorized about education. An unknown rhetorician²⁰³ in the second century AD in a work encouraging the study of rhetoric defends Protagoras against the insult thrown at him by Epicurus that he was a late-learner (ὀψιμαθής) by citing two of the sophist's pronouncements from his *Great Speech* (Μέγας Λόγος).²⁰⁴ The first reads: φύσεως καὶ ἀσκήσεως διδασκαλία δεῖται, while the second runs ἀπὸ νεότητος δὲ ἀρξαμένους δεῖ μανθάνειν (DK 80 B3). For the anonymous writer these statements exonerate Protagoras of Epicurus' slander. For our purposes they inspire confidence in Plato's account of Protagoras' educational ideas. For, the two statements contain two ideas that are integral in Plato's account: a) An important function is played by natural endowment (see subsections 5.4.2, 5.4.3) and b) Education must start early and involves a type of drilling. Indeed, the *Protagoras* even appears to contain an echo of the first statement, when Plato has Protagoras say of bravery that ἀπὸ φύσεως καὶ εὐτροφίας τῶν ψυχῶν γίγνεται (351b1-2). But to understand exactly how these two ideas were incorporated by Protagoras into his political thought, one must turn back to Plato.

Plato has Protagoras describe what is apparently the typical Greek education, but, as will be seen, the sophist draws a novel inference from what is typical. As soon as a child can understand speech, he says, his nurse and mother, his pedagogue and father point out to him what is just and unjust, honorable and shameful, pious and impious, what to do and what not to

²⁰³ The fragments survived as an appendix in certain MSS of Stobaeus. They were first edited and published by J. A. Cramer 1839-1841, and again by A. Bohler 1903 who also added a commentary. For a synopsis of the work, see Bohler 1903: 12-13.

²⁰⁴ It has been suggested that this "Great Speech" is identical with Protagoras' *On Truth* (see n77). If so, then an even closer connection is made between Protagoras' relativism, his political thinking and his ideas on education.

do. If he learns the lesson, great; if not, “they straighten him with threats and blows like a stick that’s beginning to warp and bend” (326d5-7). His γραμματισταί continue the same process and furthermore have him read poets so that the praises of good men will encourage him to be like them (325e-326a). The κιθαριστής continues the education by corporal punishment, and also uses musical tunes to inculcate the qualities of docility and “how to be in step and in harmony” (326b3). He does not expressly indicate with what exactly the student is supposed to be in harmony, but since the quality of “harmony” is coupled with docility (ἡμερώτεροι) and occurs in the context of learning the morality of the elders, it is safe to say that Protagoras means here conformity with the rules he is learning.

The student also goes to the παιδοτρίβης in order that his body may gain the strength and coordination to execute what he has learned from the other teachers (326b5-c2). Finally, the last teacher the student confronts – and shall confront until he dies – is the city itself. The city prescribes laws which, if violated, whether the violator is an office-holder or a civilian, demand punishment. The punishment is not vindictive, though. Protagoras makes it clear that it is really an act of instruction (324ab). This idea that criminal punishment is really just an act of public instruction is stressed when Protagoras compares obeying the laws to a child’s following the model letters of his grammar teacher. It is also stressed by an etymological argument. Civic punishment, he notes, is called εὔθυναί. Thus the city εὐθύνει, just as the parents had straightened (εὐθύνουσι) (325d7) their unruly stick. The etymological argument is somewhat strained, as the Athenians called only the examination of outgoing officials εὔθυναί, not criminal punishment either *per se* or in its entirety.²⁰⁵ It is a weak point in his argument, but encapsulates nonetheless his major thesis: The community teaches ἀρετή (political ability together with morality) by an elaborate, often painful, system of coercion (κόλασις).

²⁰⁵ Cf. Adam & Adam 1893: 124; Taylor 1991: 97; Denyer 2008: 118.

5.3.2 Κόλασις and Conformity

The interpretation of the *logos* as explaining how virtue is acquired does not account for the fact that, actually, virtue is never taught in Protagoras' description of education. A passage from the *Theaetetus* is instructive here. Asked what knowledge is, Theaetetus replies it is geometry, tanning and the other crafts (146c7-d2). Socrates then launches into an *elenchus* to show that the young man has given an instance (or an *ὄνομα*) of knowledge, not a definition of knowledge (147b10-c1). Similarly, in the *logos* Protagoras' "teachers" have not taught morality, they have taught instances of morality. It is summed up in the candid imperatives τὰ μὲν ποίει, τὰ δὲ μὴ ποίει. The child does not learn virtue; he learns how to behave. Several conclusions can be derived from this one point. First, it suggests that Vlastos was right to see a tacit assumption of relativism in this description.²⁰⁶ The *argumentum ex silentio* has value here. If Protagoras assumed any sort of objective content in the morality whose origin he has just mythologized, now that he is describing how societal education imparts knowledge of that morality, his case would be immeasurably better, if he would simply identify that objective content. As it is, the child only learns the community's do's and don't's; Protagoras says not a word on the content of those do's and don't's. On the other hand, if the opinions of the city are the community's morality, as I have argued the *mythos* claims, then in pointing out that the child is conformed to the ways of the community, Protagoras has said all he could about the learning of virtue. Thus the picture of societal education presupposes a relativist outlook.

The leitmotif of this section of the *logos* is not the acquisition of virtue, but rather κόλασις. The child is to be bent into shape by his parents, made to imitate his ancestors by his γραμματισταί, taught the quality of conformity by his κιθαρισταί, and any recalcitrance meets

²⁰⁶ 1956: xviii n37.

with physical correction. Protagoras is describing typical education in order to point out, not the illumination of young minds with important moral and democratic concepts, but the coercion inherent in the process. He is giving an empirical and sociological argument that education is merely a socialization process enacted by parents and city alike in order to produce conformity with the environment.

Once the theme of κόλασις is appreciated, the point Protagoras wishes to make in this section of the logos becomes clearer. It is not re-stating the mythos and justifying (per se) democratic decision-making, but building on the mythos and explaining how the original community, brought together by accidental concord, endured despite the multiplicity of human opinions. The original generation instilled their opinions by a systematized process of environmental κόλασις into the second generation, which the second generation did to the third, the third to the fourth, and so on. In this way there was established a continuity of consensus.²⁰⁷ The individual is conditioned from birth to think in accordance with his environment. The ethicality of the original nucleus perpetuates itself through κόλασις of which education is one form just as much as criminal punishment.²⁰⁸ Genuine consensus is feasible because opinions are shaped by the environment.

The parallelism of this section of the logos with the mythos supports this reading of Protagoras' societal education as an explanation of how morality is passed on, not acquired. When doling out the powers to the animals, Epimetheus gave powers that were divided into four categories. He gave powers that provided for protection against other animals, then powers that protected the animals from the elements. Then he provided for the animals' diet and finally

²⁰⁷ Cf. Vlastos 1956: xix-xx, Mansfeld 1981: 46.

²⁰⁸ Protagoras' unique interpretation of punishment (which he curiously attributes to the Athenians [see Denyer 2008: 111-112]) as a deterrent of unjust behavior, rather than a vindictive act for its own sake (Prt. 324a3-b7) would thus be, according to my interpretation, another side of his sociological analysis of the polis as an institution perpetuated by conformity.

addressed the issue of reproduction. Similarly, the mythos proper explained how humans gained for themselves through the use of intelligence the means of obtaining food and protection from the elements, then how they gained protection from the other animals by the emergence of cities. At this point to be parallel to the animal kingdom, the mythos should address the perpetuation of the human species. But it doesn't, and the fact that it doesn't suggests that the logos was meant to do just that.

5.4 RIGHT DECISION-MAKING (εὐβουλία)

Having described education as an instrument of κόλασις, Protagoras devotes the rest of the logos (326e6-328d2) to addressing directly Socrates' second concern: If ἀρετή is taught, why do excellent fathers not pass it on to the sons? On the whole, his answer is that Socrates is asking the wrong question. Fathers do pass on this ability to their sons, as he has just made clear in the first section of the logos and as he will repeat at the end of the Great Speech itself, when he accuses Socrates of being spoiled (τρυφᾶς) because he claims nobody teaches Greek, when actually everybody teaches it (327e1-328a1). The question that Socrates ought rather to ask, he says, is why ordinary sons are born to fine fathers (326e6-7). Protagoras answers this question through the flute-players analogy (327a2-c4). Imagine, he says, that civilization consisted in everybody's being able to play the flute. While everybody would have the skill to play, certain individuals would excel because of a natural proclivity (εὐφροσύνη). This natural proclivity is not genetically transmittable. An ordinary flute-player can produce an exceptional son, and *vice versa*.

In the immediate context this analogy satisfies Socrates' concern. In the larger picture, however, it provides important information about how in a community of consensus one makes good and bad decisions. The fact that the city's institutions shape opinions does not preclude the possibility of wrong decision-making. Protagoras' answer is that one should be able to divine what the city believes and act accordingly. This is the essence of the good decision-making (εὐβουλία) that he teaches.

5.4.1 Ἀρετή and Harmony

The flute-players analogy also reinforces the idea that for Protagoras ἀρετή (goodness, virtue) consists in conformity to the community's standards. Once the analogy is introduced, something that has probably been suspected for some time finally becomes clear. Protagoras considers ἀρετή to be a τέχνη. Up till now there had been some confusion on this score. Both Socrates and Protagoras agree that political "skill" (ἡ πολιτικὴ τέχνη) constitutes a large portion of moral virtue. Socrates had equated the two before Protagoras' address (320c1) and Protagoras had voiced no objection (cf. section 2.0, subsection 3.2.1). But whether ἀρετή itself is a τέχνη is a different matter altogether. As the dialogue will finally reveal, Socrates is more inclined to hold that ἀρετή is a knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), while Protagoras has an entirely different conception of it. For him it is as much a skill as the trade of the blacksmith or potter and is learned by the same process – apprenticeship. This conception is reflected in the mythos. Although different divinities give the technological crafts and political virtue, they are both "learned behaviors" that are the result of an evolutionary process. For that reason in the flute-players analogy Protagoras likens human ideas of right (τὰ δίκαια) and lawful (τὰ νόμιμα) to manufactured products (τεχνήματα) (327b1). If society and morality originated from the accidental coincidence of

outlooks among primitive humans and was then passed on by societal education from father to son, mother to daughter, then virtue can be considered a “learned skill.” However, it is a trade that, unlike other human skills, did not have its origin in human ingenuity. It did not come from Prometheus, but from agreement and, ultimately, from the individual’s genuine assessment of reality. For this reason its rules can never be set down in perpetuity, but remain alterable, in order that the individual’s assessment of reality will never be compromised.

The flute-players analogy is therefore quite appropriate. It captures the aspect of technical skill in ἀρετή and highlights the relativity of human values by likening what a city considers right and lawful to a tune. The city’s ethicality being a tune, the individual’s ἀρετή therefore consists in being in harmony with the collective ethicality. Harmony is an important idea for Protagoras. Not only did his interpretation of societal education as a means of conformity reveal his concern for it, but also at one point in that discussion he offered the almost programmatic statement: πᾶς γὰρ ὁ βίος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εὐρυθμίας τε καὶ εὐαρμοστίας δεῖται (326b5-6). When therefore he compares ἀρετή to a tune in the flute-players analogy, he is continuing the metaphor and hinting a second time that an individual’s virtue is, in the last analysis, harmony. As it turns out, it is more than a metaphor. It is an image for his theory.

5.4.2 Superiority and εὐφύια

The analogy introduces the idea that certain individuals are superior to others. The citizens can be divided into those who are ordinary, run-of-the-mill (φαῦλοι) and those who are of particular ability (ἀγαθοί); or, those who are without any natural proclivity (ἀφυσεῖς) and those who have it (εὐφυσεῖς). This statement of Protagoras that certain people are better than the rest of the citizens

in ἀρετή is attested in another source.²⁰⁹ It is a problematic statement, being inconsistent with the mythos. There Zeus disseminated through Hermes δίκη and αἰδώς in equal portions. This meant, I argued, that each person's assessment of reality is equally veridical to another's (subsections 4.2.2, 4.3.4). If, however, certain individuals are better, it is implied that their assessments of reality are better, and so more accurate, than another's. If so, then individual assessments of reality are not equally veridical. Some are fundamentally flawed, while others are verifiably better.

The question of how one can be superior in ἀρετή is further complicated by Protagoras' description of his role as a professional teacher. He concludes the entire logos by saying that Socrates' failure to find a teacher of ἀρετή is just as absurd as one who fails to find a Greek teacher among Greeks. Then, he makes the startling claim to have the ability to make one excel in ἀρετή:

ἀλλὰ κἂν εἰ ὀλίγον ἔστιν τις ὅστις διαφέρει ἡμῶν προβιβάσαι εἰς ἀρετήν, ἀγαπητόν. ὧν δὴ ἐγὼ οἶμαι εἷς εἶναι, καὶ διαφερόντως ἂν τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων ὀνήσαι τινα πρὸς τὸ καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθὸν γενέσθαι (328a8-b3).

There appears to be a contradiction between Protagoras' relativism and his belief in individual εὐφυΐα. This superiority of both the εὐφυεῖς citizens and Protagoras himself has been variously interpreted. J. S. Morrison argues that Protagoras means that they are the men who have expertise in leadership and that this amounts to a subversion of the Cleisthenic ideal of equal opportunity in office-holding.²¹⁰ As Morrison argues, Protagoras makes this implication by first beginning with a definition of ἡ πολιτικὴ τέχνη as “good citizenship,” then shifting to a definition of it as “being good at politics.” However, it is clear that Protagoras does not see a

²⁰⁹ The claim φύσεως καὶ ἀσκήσεως διδασκαλία δεῖται (DK 80 B3) implies that one φύσις is superior to another (for details on the claim see subsection 5.3.1).

²¹⁰ 1941: 8-9.

fundamental distinction between these two ideas.²¹¹ Kerferd considers their superiority to consist in a natural aptitude which enables them to direct the city by the most beneficial decisions.²¹² Most recently Balot has advocated this view.²¹³ Farrar agrees with Kerferd and Balot that those with εὐφροσύνη direct the city's decision-making by the standard of the beneficial, but adds that the politician who is εὐφροσύνης is regarded by Protagoras as one who encourages the citizens through his own argumentation to learn how to calculate their own interests by the same standard, in the hope that at a future date the city will be more self-ruling.²¹⁴ These views, however, all agree in having Protagoras recognize the standard of objective utility, and as such, are incompatible with a relativist position (see section 1.4). They are also at variance with the fundamental difference between Socrates and Protagoras in the dialogue in that they assume that virtue is an ἐπιστήμη that calculates and deduces what is proper behavior, rather than a τέχνη (cf. subsection 5.4.1).

Quite some time ago A. E. Taylor, commenting on this apparent contradiction, offered the following interpretation:

“To make the whole speech consistent, we should have to understand him [Protagoras] to be claiming for himself a certain exceptional ability in catching the tone of the ‘social tradition’ of Athens, or any other community he visits, and communicating that tone to his pupils.”²¹⁵

In other words, Protagoras' relativism has led him to conclude that “there is no moral standard more ultimate than the standard of respectability current in a given society.”²¹⁶ I maintain that Taylor is basically correct, despite the tendency of some scholars to reject him out of hand.²¹⁷

When Protagoras says he has the ability to make people superior in ἀρετή, he means he can teach

²¹¹ Cf. Taylor 1991: 71-72, 74-76. Kerferd 1953: 44 observes that Socrates too accepts this definition, at least he does not object to (or notice?) Protagoras' blending of two ideas which modern thought sharply distinguishes.

²¹² 1953: 45.

²¹³ 2006: 76-78.

²¹⁴ 1988: 74-75.

²¹⁵ 1937: 246.

²¹⁶ 1937: 246.

²¹⁷ E.g. Cornford 1935: 73; Guthrie 1971: 175.

them to make decisions that are in keeping with the moral standards of the student's environment. This curriculum results in a similarity between the sophist and the student. When the student becomes a politician and applies what he has learned to public matters and public debate, he will stand to the city as the sophist stands to the student.

5.4.3 Consistency with one's Moral and Social Environment

Understanding the role of the sophist as making the student behave with more consistency with his social and moral environment and make decisions that are more consistent with it, makes best sense of the passage in which Protagoras claims to be able to make one superior in ἀρετή. He makes the claim through an analogy:

εἴθ' ὥσπερ ἂν εἰ ζητοῖς τίς διδάσκαλος τοῦ ἐλληνίζειν, οὐδ' ἂν εἷς φανείη, οὐδέ γ' ἂν οἶμαι εἰ ζητοῖς τίς ἂν ἡμῖν διδάξειεν τοὺς τῶν χειροτεχνῶν ὑεῖς αὐτὴν ταύτην τὴν τέχνην ἦν δὴ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μεμαθήκασιν, καθ' ὅσον οἷός τ' ἦν ὁ πατήρ καὶ οἱ τοῦ πατρὸς φίλοι ὄντες ὁμότεχνοι, τούτους ἔτι τίς ἂν διδάξειεν, οὐ ῥάδιον οἶμαι εἶναι, ὃ Σώκρατες, τούτων διδάσκαλον φανῆναι, τῶν δὲ ἀπείρων παντάπασι ῥάδιον, οὕτω δὲ ἀρετῆς καὶ τῶν ἄλλων πάντων· ἀλλὰ κἂν εἰ ὀλίγον ἔστιν τις ὅστις διαφέρει ἡμῶν προβιβάσαι εἰς ἀρετὴν, ἀγαπητόν. ὦν δὴ ἐγὼ οἶμαι εἷς εἶναι κτλ (327e3-328b2).

Socrates had questioned the teachability of ἀρετή because remarkable fathers failed to pass it on to their sons. Protagoras then launched into the logos in order to explain this phenomenon and now he draws his conclusions. First, he compares ἀρετή to language. Virtue is taught by everybody in the community just as one is taught to speak Greek. This point recaps his discussion of societal education. Then, he defines his role as teacher. He compares ἀρετή to a trade-skill (τέχνη) and comments that while it would be very easy to find a teacher for the inexperienced (τῶν ἀπείρων), like Pherecrates' wild men, it would be very difficult to find a teacher for the sons of the practitioners of that skill (τῶν χειροτεχνῶν) who could teach them the very skill they learned from their fathers just as well as they learned it from their fathers and his

friends who practice the same skill (ὁμότεχνοι). The comparison of ἀρετή with a τέχνη shows how Protagoras conceptualizes his role as teacher. He teaches the sons of citizens the very skill that they would have learned from their fathers and their fathers' friends. In other words, the teacher replicates societal education.

But in doing so he only teaches a local ethicality. Protagoras takes the place of one's father and his same-minded friends. The phrase φίλοι ὄντες ὁμότεχνοι is important. It shows that Protagoras does not teach morality *simpliciter*, but a local variant. He does not teach a trade-skill that can be practiced anywhere, but as it is practiced by the young people's fathers and their environment. If he taught a morality or political science that was globally valid, there would be no reason for him to stress the fact that he teaches only what fellow tradesmen would have taught. In fine, there is reference here to the mythos. By restricting his teaching to what the young people's φίλοι would have taught, Protagoras recalls his definition of society, and so morality, as κόσμοι καὶ δεσμοὶ φιλίας συναγωγοί, while by adding that these φίλοι are ὁμότεχνοι he repeats the point that the original φιλία was merely a ὁμοδοξία.

This passage then provides strong support for Taylor's interpretation of the sophist as one who determines what a given polis considers to be right and wrong, good and bad, honorable and shameful and who passes it on to the younger generation. Consequently, his students differ from the rest of the citizens inasmuch as they have a deeper familiarity with their polis' ethicality. They are better interpreters of the city's ethicality than the rest, who are not ignorant (ἀμαθεῖς), but merely inexperienced, unaware (ἄπειροι).²¹⁸ Each person is still the measure of right and wrong and democracy is the best means available to him to live according to that personal measure of his without compromise. But certain individuals are more familiar with the city because they have undergone the right kind of education. If Protagoras did in fact call this

²¹⁸ For ἀπειρία in Protagoras' thought, see below subsection 6.1.2 & fn. 226.

education an ἄσκησις, as a fragment suggests (φύσεως καὶ ἀσκήσεως διδασκαλία δεῖται [DK 80 B3]), then he used a word that captured well the literal idea of training and drilling he envisioned and at the same time the emphasis he placed on beginning this education early (ἀπὸ νεότητος δὲ ἀρξαμένους δεῖ μανθάνειν [DK 80 B3] is better understood.

But as the first fragment recalls, it might also be natural endowment (φύσις) that makes his students differ from the rest, not just training. These people will then be the same as those he calls the εὐφυεῖς and ἀφυεῖς in the analogy. But if it is consistency that makes right, then these εὐφυεῖς will be those who by chance are fit for their environment, while the ἀφυεῖς are the unfit. In terms of natural ability and intelligence, if these two groups were placed in an unbiased area, they would be intellectual and ethical equals. But because they find themselves in an area biased to one outlook, there emerge apparent discrepancies. Εὐφύια then is just the chance fitness with one's environment, not absolute superiority, and the student does not receive absolute, unqualified superiority from his training, but rather develops a greater fitness with his environment. That is why Protagoras in the *Theaetetus* says that one is not to be made smarter and even denies that this is possible. Rather, he says, his disposition is to be changed; that is, as I suggest, his personal outlook is to be made more consonant with the outlook of his environment (166e-167a).

The presence of such men who have the ability to read the city and determine its opinion on public matters explains what Protagoras means by right decision-making. It is choosing the course of action that is consistent with the city's ethicality. This ability Protagoras professes to impart, namely to divine what the city thinks on a given question, is well suited to the behavior the Athenian democracy historically expected from its office-holders. Despite the fact that the Athenian Assembly often tried to micromanage the approximately fourteen hundred offices in

the empire, an Athenian office-holder had many occasions when he was obliged to exercise his own judgment. In these cases his duty was not so much to make the right decision, as to make the decision the Demos would approve of. As Demosthenes axiomatically observes, τὸν γὰρ ὑπὲρ πόλεως πράττοντά τι δεῖ τὸ τῆς πόλεως ἥθος μιμεῖσθαι (22.64). There was a market for Protagoras' teaching.

5.4.4 Εὐβουλία, Harmony and Δίκη καὶ Αἰδώς

This ability to make decisions in keeping with the moral and social environment of the city is of a piece with Protagoras' emphasis on harmony. As he states programmatically: πᾶς γὰρ ὁ βίος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εὐρυθμίας τε καὶ εὐαρμοστίας δεῖται (326b5-6) (cf. subsection 5.4.1). Just as parents, teachers and juries seek to instill conformity and punish any failure in demonstrating it, so the politician who shows it to a high degree will receive praise and commendation. In this way Protagoras' doctrine of harmony simply institutionalizes societal praise and blame (ἔπαινος καὶ ψόγος) and codifies in a theoretical way the operative principle of a shame-culture. If the collective opinion makes right (as long as it is truly collective and truly an opinion), then harmony with it is praiseworthy behavior. Good decision-making is synonymous with moral goodness. Protagoras promises to impart to Hippocrates not only εὐβουλία (318e5), but to make him a better person as well (318a8, 328b3). Thus, the interpretation of Protagoras' εὐβουλία as making decisions consistent with one's moral and social environment not only gives a foundation to his emphasis on harmony, but explains also how he can speak of his εὐβουλία as synonymous with moral goodness. Consensus and δίκη καὶ αἰδώς are the same thing.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The logos Protagoras delivers does not in itself provide a justification for democracy. That had been done in the mythos. Instead, in two sections it provides answers to questions that that justification had raised. In the first section of the logos he explains how his theory that morality is ultimately the individual's assessment of reality creates, not anarchy, but a stable community. Characterizing polis life as a system of κόλασις allows him to interpret the polis on the whole as a form of education designed to produce conformity to the polis' established consensus. In the second section of the logos he explains what his role as teacher in a community of consensus is and, in so doing, explains what he means when he professes to impart εὐβουλία to his students. He will give them the ability to make decisions that are entirely consistent with his city's moral and social environment. In this way they will not only be in perfect harmony with their polis, but they will be good men as well, since in living according to consensus, they live according to δίκη and αἰδώς.

On a personal note Protagoras is also free now of Socrates' dilemma and has explained how two apparently self-contradictory statements were true (cf. subsection 3.2.2). Just as the mythos explained how ἀρετή was possessed by everybody: Because morality at base derives from the individual's opinion, the individual cannot but have virtue; so now the logos has made clear how the Athenians are right to think that it is also a thing taught. Because it can not be guaranteed that every new member born into the community will by nature have the same disposition as its founding members, that new member must undergo a process of adaptation which, while it might be called "teaching," properly speaking it is not the acquisition of anything that will make him in any true sense more virtuous.

If these students of Protagoras were going to lead a private life, this instruction of his might never seem to be at odds with the relativism it was based on. But what if they took on leadership roles as politicians in their city? How would they maintain the community of consensus instead of imposing their own opinions on the citizen-body? In the next chapter I discuss this question.

6.0 PROTAGORAS' WISE POLITICIAN

For the most part, Protagoras' students were not going to become citizens holding the occasional office. They were going to be near-professionals who would play a leading role in public decision-making. After all, that is the reason Hippocrates shows up at Socrates' house, eager for an interview with Protagoras (section 2.0). This role they would play raises an important question about Protagoras' political theory. How could one take an active part in political deliberation without giving the lie to relativism? The problem is inherent in the function of a politician. In his role as adviser, he occupies a position of superior knowledge and expertise to the voting citizens. In times of emergency, he knows what is best, when the rest of the citizens do not know or, if they ventured a solution, would prove mistaken. How is this position compatible with the ἀρετή of Protagoras' instruction which apparently binds him to the consensus of the community? Plato has Protagoras answer this question in the *Theaetetus*. In sum, Protagoras here explains that the politician is only an advocate of the city's opinion. In times of emergency, when there is real uncertainty as to which course of action is best, the wise and expert politician advocates the opinion *that is consistent* with the city's ethical environment. Thus he does not have any moral or intellectual superiority over others, but is simply familiar with the process that makes values and properties real and actual as far as his city is concerned.

This interpretation of Protagoras' words in the *Theaetetus* stands at variance to the traditional interpretation which argues that, when it came to leadership, Protagoras espoused a

doctrine of utility. The politician is not one who knows what is good *to the city*, but what is good *for the city*. He has a privileged insight into the nature and essence of the good and bad and into how the former benefits and the latter harms the city. The inconsistency of such a politician with Protagoras' relativism is clear and there have been many various attempts to reconcile the apparent inconsistency.²¹⁹ These attempts, however, typically take a passage dripping with irony at face value. An examination of this irony will suggest that the utilitarian Protagoras is a facetious mirage which Plato has Socrates construct in order to point up that very incompatibility between moral relativism and any doctrine of utility that has made the passage so problematic. At the same time it will provide evidence that the role Protagoras envisions for his politician does not give the lie to relativism, but preserves it, by making him the guarantor of the city's opinion by discharging his office according to what may be called the doctrine of consistency.

6.1 THE DOCTRINE OF CONSISTENCY IN THE *THEAETETUS*

Protagoras elaborates on the doctrine of consistency and, specifically, how it is applied by the politician in a community without contradicting his relativism, in a passage of the *Theaetetus* given to him by and through Socrates (166a2-168c2). Though the bulk of Protagoras' elaboration is contained in that part of Socrates' defense of Protagoras which I will call the direct testimony, a look at the way Socrates introduces Protagoras, as well as a consideration of some preliminary remarks Protagoras makes on changing one's state, or disposition (*hexis*), already suggest at the outset that the idea of consistency occupied an important place in the sophist's overall thought, not just his political thinking.²²⁰

²¹⁹ See Burnyeat 1990: 23-4 & n32 for a summary.

²²⁰ For another use Protagoras made of logical consistency, see subsection 5.1.1.

6.1.1 The Inconsistent Philosopher

Socrates, acting as intellectual midwife for the young Theaetetus, has been trying to elicit a definition of knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) from him. Theaetetus had offered the definition that knowledge is perception. Socrates equated his definition with the human-measure claim of Protagoras (151e8-152a4) and goes on to “help” this idea of Theaetetus’ by placing this epistemological claim on the foundation of a Heraclitean ontology. Once done, Socrates turns to a critical examination of this Protagorean-Heraclitean system he has just constructed, to see if it is a legitimate idea. Beginning with the human-measure claim, he criticizes Protagoras for being self-contradictory. If the individual is the measure of all things, then how in the world can Protagoras lay claim to any exceptional σοφία, as he does by acting as a professional teacher? Certainly he can’t; so, in order to make it clear that his judgments were no better than another’s, he ought, Socrates says, to have said “baboon is the measure of all things,” or “pig” (161c2-e3). As it is, he implies that he is the teacher of all adult men and so gives the impression of either being hybriatic (161e2), godlike (161c8, 162a2), or just a crowd-pleaser (161e4).

This criticism is quite similar to the approach Socrates takes in the *Protagoras*. There Socrates challenges Protagoras’ assertion that ἀρετή is teachable by pointing out that the Athenians, who are wise people, believe everybody possesses it, thereby implying that, if everybody has ἀρετή, nobody can be taught it (319b3-d7). Since Protagoras, as Socrates knows, does not deny that everybody possesses it, Socrates’ argument amounts to a tacit insinuation, resembling a rhetorical *dilemma*, that Protagoras’ claim to be a teacher is either nonsensical or devious (see subsection 2.0). Similarly, now in the *Theaetetus* Socrates complains that if everybody’s perceptions and judgments are incorrigible, neither Protagoras nor anybody else can claim to be a teacher of another. In both dialogues Socrates attacks Protagoras for advocating a

theory that contradicts his profession. Only, in the *Theaetetus* Socrates is a bit more malignant. He makes the point that Protagoras' theory and profession are self-contradictory through the jest that he must either think himself a god or be pandering to the general populace. By the way, this similarity of approach between the dialogues reinforces the argument that the two dialogues present a consistent account of Protagoras' thought. But more to the point, it reflects on the role consistency played in Protagoras' thought. If Plato in two dialogues argues that Protagoras is inconsistent with himself, it is implied that consistency must have been an idea particularly valuable to Protagoras.

After a round of argumentation against the proposition that perception is knowledge, which in the end Socrates himself admits to be specious and fallacious (162a4-164e1), Socrates expresses his confidence that, if Protagoras were alive, he could satisfactorily defend his position as teacher against the charge of being inconsistent with his philosophy (164e2-6). Since he is not alive, Socrates attempts himself to give a defense for him. This defense will show that one can be “wiser” (σοφώτερος) within Protagoras' theory of relativism.²²¹ Socrates delivers the first installment of this defense – the direct testimony – in the person of Protagoras.

6.1.2 A Change of Ἔξις

After some preliminary comments in which Protagoras asserts that he would not have answered Socrates' questions regarding remembering and seeing with but one eye as Theaetetus, a mere boy, had, but would have given entirely different answers,²²² Protagoras proceeds to the charge of self-contradiction. He begins by re-asserting the validity of his human-measure claim: Each person is the measure of what does and does not exist. Or, what appears to be the case to one is

²²¹ Cf. 167d1-4.

²²² Namely, that the perceiver in each instance of perceiving is a different person (166a2-c6), although that idea is merely continuing the Heraclitean-Protagorean amalgam (see below, this subsection).

the case for him. However, perceptions are incredibly different (μυρίον διαφέρειν). To one “bad things” (κακά) can appear and be; for another “good things” (ἀγαθά). This is where the wise man comes in. The wise man is the one ὃς ἂν τινι ἡμῶν, ᾧ φαίνεται καὶ ἔστι κακά, μεταβάλλον ποιήσῃ ἀγαθὰ φαίνεσθαι τε καὶ εἶναι (166d6-8). This clarification does not amount to much of a defense, since anybody who hears it would naturally give κακά and ἀγαθά their usual moral values and be puzzled as to how one can have true, but bad perceptions and judgments. Protagoras is aware that κακά and ἀγαθά can be misunderstood, so he tells Socrates not to attack his claim on a verbal basis: τὸν δὲ λόγον αὖ μὴ τῷ ῥήματί μου δίδωκε (166d8-e1). This request (i.e. not to judge his idea “by the word”) is indication that Protagoras’ meaning – and the solution to the inconsistency – lies in the correct understanding of the words κακά and ἀγαθά.²²³

Protagoras attempts to make his point now through examples. A sick person will have certain perceptions/judgments about the food he eats. He will consider them bitter. A person who is well will have the opposite perceptions/judgments. The former is not ignorant (ἄμαθής), just as the latter is not wise (σοφός). This is an important point. The sick person’s assessment of reality is just as veridical as the healthy person’s. Or, in terms of a single individual, a person’s assessment of reality when sick is just as true as his assessment when well. Protagoras has this in common with Heraclitus, but whereas Heraclitus explained the impressions of a sick and a healthy person as different because they were at root different people (159e1-5), Protagoras explains it as a difference of ἕξις. The sick person is no more wrong than the healthy person. So it is pointless to make him wiser. He is however to be brought from a sick ἕξις to a healthy one (167a2). The reason for this is that the other state (ἡ ἑτέρα ἕξις) is better (ἀμείνων). This scenario serves as the analogue to human education: οὕτω δὲ καὶ ἐν τῇ παιδείᾳ ἀπὸ ἑτέρας ἕξεως ἐπὶ τὴν

²²³ For this use of ῥῆμα as a predicate, see Guthrie 1971: 220-221.

ἀμείνω μεταβλητέον (167a4-5). Only, the doctor brings about the change by drugs, the professional teacher by speech.

This analogy between medical treatment and human education gives the additional information that a person to whom “bad things” appear and are must be brought into another state, or disposition. It fails to give any clarification as to what constitutes “bad” and “good” things. This appears to be deliberate. Protagoras is still speaking with reserve as to the nature of good and bad. He prefers to call the one state either “the other” (ἐτέρα), the opposite (τάναντία) or “better” (ἀμείνων) and never labels the opposite state explicitly as “worse.”²²⁴ He merely wants Socrates to understand that a change must be made between ἔξεις.

Protagoras then re-asserts perceptual and judgmental incorrigibility and accounts for it with a Cyrenaic argument: One cannot form judgments on what is not, nor can one form judgments on anything that he is not experiencing.²²⁵ He then offers a reason why a change of perception/judgment necessitates a change of state:

ἀλλ’ οἶμαι πονηρὰ ψυχῆς ἔξει δοξάζοντα συγγενῇ αὐτῆς χρηστῇ ἐποίησε δοξάσαι ἕτερα τοιαῦτα, ἃ δὴ τινες τὰ φαντάσματα ὑπὸ ἀπειρίας²²⁶ ἀληθῆ καλοῦσιν, ἐγὼ δὲ βελτίω μὲν τὰ ἕτερα τῶν ἐτέρων, ἀληθέστερα δὲ οὐδέν (167b1-4).²²⁷

It is because a πονηρὰ ψυχῆς ἔξις causes one to generate correspondingly πονηρὰ φαντάσματα and a χρηστὴ ψυχῆς ἔξις causes one to generate correspondingly χρηστὰ φαντάσματα that a change of opinion requires a change of state (ἔξις). Thus the importance of consistency and the

²²⁴ See below, fn. 226.

²²⁵ For the similarity with the Cyrenaic school, see Mannebach 1961: 48-49 (fr. 211A) and subsection 6.3.1. For the pragmatism in the statement, cf. subsection 2.1.1.

²²⁶ Ἀπειρία here is perhaps more than a euphemism. People, Protagoras admits, call some perceptions/judgments true and false, but he cannot say they do so because they are wrong, since that would present a problem for the human-measure claim. Instead, he says they do so because they are “without experience” (ὑπὸ ἀπειρίας). Protagoras uses this word again for human “ignorance” at *Prt.* 328a7, which suggests it is indeed a feature of Protagoras’ thought. It can also explain Protagoras’ hesitation to use the word “worse” (χείρων) in this passage. To see the world in absolute terms is not wrong, but only a result of inexperience, a want of greater awareness, because one is forming an opinion on what one is not experiencing (cf. above, fn. 225). In other words, Protagoras explained human fallibility as a merely ἀπειρία. Plato in the *peritropē* that follows (171a6-c7) will challenge the cogency of this position.

²²⁷ I follow the text here of Duke et al. 1995.

correspondence between two factors already figures in Protagoras' understanding of human epistemology.

Additionally, this observation finally reveals what Protagoras meant by κακά and ἀγαθά; namely, πονηρά and χρηστά. These terms then become his preferred terms until the end of the direct testimony.

6.2 THE ROLE OF THE POLITICIAN

6.2.1 The Creation of Δίκη and Αἰδώς

Armed now with these terms, Protagoras clarifies the role of the sophist and politician:

Φημί γὰρ...τοὺς δὲ γε σοφοὺς τε καὶ ἀγαθοὺς ῥήτορας ταῖς πόλεσι τὰ χρηστὰ ἀντὶ τῶν πονηρῶν δίκαια δοκεῖν εἶναι ποιεῖν. ἐπεὶ οἶά γ' ἂν ἐκάστη πόλει δίκαια καὶ καλὰ δοκῇ, ταῦτα καὶ εἶναι αὐτῇ, ἕως ἂν αὐτὰ νομίζῃ· ἀλλ' ὁ σοφὸς ἀντὶ πονηρῶν ὄντων αὐτοῖς ἐκάστων χρηστὰ ἐποίησεν εἶναι καὶ δοκεῖν (167b7-c7).

This passage is a challenge to translate. The first two clauses are fairly straightforward:

For I assert that the wise and good politicians cause good things instead of bad things to seem to be just to their cities. For, whatever sort of things seem just and honorable to a city, these things [I maintain] are in fact so for it, as long it holds them to be.

What is noteworthy here is that the couplet δίκαια καὶ καλὰ appears to be a prosaic version of what in the mythos had been δίκη καὶ αἰδώς. Both signify morality by designating it by its legal and ethical poles.

Translation becomes a problem in the last clause regarding the underlined words. Is χρηστά an oblique predicate after εἶναι καὶ δοκεῖν, in which case δίκαια καὶ καλὰ from the previous clause must be understood as its accusative subject? Or, is the accusative subject χρηστά, in which case δίκαια καὶ καλὰ from the previous clause must be understood as its

predicate? The second option is typically preferred, which renders the sentence along these lines: “But the wise man when (these) things are in particular case unsound, makes sound things be and appear (just) to them.”²²⁸

There are several problems with this translation. First, the absence of the article with *χρηστά* suggests that it is indeed an oblique predicate, not an accusative subject. Secondly, it is forced to render *ἐποίησεν* in the present tense.²²⁹ However, Protagoras is not making either a gnomic or an empirical statement, but is referring to a time prior to the city’s establishment of what is just and honorable. Finally, it makes the last clause tautological with the first: the wise man makes good things appear just and honorable. But tautology is typically used to elucidate obscure phraseology and there is nothing particularly obscure in the first clause. At any rate, *ἀλλά* indicates Protagoras is adding something new.

For these reasons, the first option appears preferable.²³⁰ Thus the whole passage is rendered thus:

For, I assert that the wise and good politicians cause good things instead of bad things to seem to be just to their cities. For, whatever sort of things seem just and honorable to a city, these things [I maintain] are in fact so for it, as long it holds them to be; but it is the wise politician who *made* those just and honorable things, when they each were bad things to them, be and seem good things.

This translation makes clear the point *ἀλλά* is making. The politician makes sure that the city determines things that are *χρηστά* to be just and honorable. True, whatever the city considers just and honorable is so, but the politician made those things it would presently determine to be just and honorable, back at the time when they seemed (and so were) bad, seem and be good, which in turn enabled them to be deemed just and honorable. In other words, while it is the city that determines what is just and honorable by collective decision-making, the politician operates

²²⁸ This is Kerferd’s rendering (1949: 24-25). So McDowell 1973: 40.

²²⁹ As McDowell 1973: 40-41; Levett (in Burnyeat 1990: 293); Chappell 2004: 104 do.

²³⁰ This is the rendering of Cornford 1935 and Chappell 2004.

before that process. Hence the aorist. When the city is about to ratify (i. e. deem just and honorable) things that are πονηρά, he intervenes and causes the city to ratify things that are χρηστά. And just how he causes the city to do so Protagoras has already explained: He changes the audience's state (ἔξις) through speech (λόγοις).

Who creates what is just and honorable? The traditional translation suggests it is the politician. In making sound things appear just and honorable, he presents an interpretation of good things to the city which, when ratified, become justice. However, besides the problems discussed above with this translation, it attributes to the politician special insight into goodness and justice – a claim incompatible with the human-measure. On the other hand, when read as I suggest, the city's pronouncement is what is just and honorable. The politician just offers what he deems to be χρηστόν or πονηρόν. He has no privileged insight into Justice or Honorableness.

6.2.2 “Good Things” and “Bad Things”

However, he *might* have considerable insight into what is χρηστόν or πονηρόν. It is thus imperative to know what these adjectives mean in this passage. Socrates concludes that Protagoras must have meant χρηστόν to mean the useful, and several modern scholars and translators have followed the Platonic lead.²³¹ However, there are problems with taking it in this way. First of all, although etymologically derived from χράομαι (whence χρήσιμος), the word seldom admits the translation “useful.”²³² Furthermore, in this passage its antonym is πονηρός, not ἀχρεῖος or ἄχρηστος, and later, when Socrates concludes that Protagoras must not have considered the beneficial relative, he uses different vocabulary, denoting the beneficial with the words τὸ συμφέρον (172a5) or ὠφέλιμα (177d5). For these reasons, others have preferred to

²³¹ E.g. Cornford 1935: 73; McDowell 1973: 40, 165-168; Chappell 2004: 105-107.

²³² Cf. Dover 1974: 296.

translate it as “sound” or “wholesome.”²³³ While this translation is better, it still fails to do justice to the wide semantic field covered by the adjective. The word πονηρός is even more problematic. Those who translate χρηστός as useful render it “harmful,” while those who translate the former as sound or wholesome, render it “pernicious.” Both, however, strain the meaning of the word.

On the whole, the words simply mean good and bad. However, though in a sense synonyms to ἀγαθός and κακός, their meaning can be broken down into four aspects: an etymological, a concrete, a moral and a sociopolitical one. It is sometimes claimed that the etymology of χρηστός justifies translating it “useful,” since its derivation from χράομαι suggests an original meaning of “usable.”²³⁴ However, there is a world of difference between “usable” and “useful,” and Greeks in the fifth century were more likely to signify the latter with χρήσιμος, ὠφέλιμος, or εὐχρηστος. The concrete sense of χρηστός is clearly related to the etymology of the word. What is usable is that which is fit for use (χράομαι). Accordingly, in Herodotus it is found as an epithet for furniture (1.94), a bow (3.78), a path (7.215) and in Plato for a house (*Grg.* 504a).²³⁵

The etymology of πονηρός is typically given as deriving from labor and hardship (πένομαι, πόνος).²³⁶ However, the concrete sense it bears suggests that that etymological force was quite weak.²³⁷ Aristophanes uses it of a piece of merchandise (*Pl.* 352) and of a coin’s mint (*Pl.* 862, 957), while Xenophon uses it to denote shabby horses (*Cyr.* 1.4.19). This concrete use of πονηρός is closer to the use of the perfect active of πονέω in the sense of being damaged, and

²³³ So Burnyeat 1990: 26.

²³⁴ Cf. Dover 1974: 50-3; Chantraine 1968-80: 1276; Frisk 1960-70, vol 2: 1119.

²³⁵ Chantraine 1968-1980: 1276 does not recognize a concrete usage for χρηστός. Frisk 1960-70, vol 2: 1119 does, but gives no examples.

²³⁶ Neil 1901: 206-8; Chantraine 1968-80: 881; Frisk 1960-70, vol 2: 505.

²³⁷ Cf. Chantraine 1968-80: 881: “le lien sémantique avec *penomai* et même avec *ponos* [est] relâché,” as well as Frisk 1960-70, vol 2: 505, who translates it as “mühselig, unbrauchbar, schlecht, böse.”

so unfit for use (e.g. of ships in Th. 7.38). Since the etymology of πονηρός as full of hardship does not account for these concrete usages, it would be a mistake to regard it as informing the other aspects of the adjective. In sum, the basic idea in both χρηστός and πονηρός will describe the physical and operational integrity of an object, i.e. whether they are “faulty” or “faultless.” To say that an object is useful or harmful is to infer new information from its operational integrity, information that Greek used different words to express (e.g., χρήσιμος, ὠφέλιμος, βλαβερός).

The words also developed a moral aspect. The χρηστός individual is virtuous, while the πονηρός is wicked.²³⁸ It is sometimes asserted that the moral sense of these words grew out of their etymological meaning in order to highlight the civic assumptions lying behind Greek, and specifically Athenian, morality. So, the χρηστός man is the one who can benefit his city materially,²³⁹ while the πονηρός is the one who is too poor to do so.²⁴⁰ While the ethic of service to the state undeniably looms large in Greek thought, it can be denied that this ethic is reflected in the roots of these words. First, as noted just above, the etymology of χρηστός appears to denote operational integrity rather than any “beneficialness,” while the etymology of πονηρός was soon overshadowed by the concrete aspect the word developed. Secondly, while it is true that being useless in this civic sense is often denoted by ἄχρηστος,²⁴¹ the positive “useful” is in fourth-century oratory typically denoted by the word χρήσιμος.²⁴² Therefore, it is more likely that the moral sense grew out of the concrete sense. Just as an object can be faulty or faultless for various reasons, so an individual is “blameless” or “blameworthy” for a variety of reasons. This

²³⁸ Cf. Connor 1971: 88-89nn2 & 3.

²³⁹ So, Adkins 1960: 215n6; Donlan 1980: 66; Rosenbloom 2004: 63-66.

²⁴⁰ Neil 1901: 206; Reverdin 1945: 210. Rosenbloom 2004: 59 is quite explicit: “The label πονηρός/μολυβηρός derives from its bearers’ relation to the means of production.”

²⁴¹ E.g. Is. 4.27, 7.41, 11.50; D. 19.135.

²⁴² E.g. D. 18.311, 19.281, 4.7; Hyp. 2.10. This last citation is in particular instructive. The speaker entertains the scenario in which his opponent is not a good man (χρηστός), but is at least useful (χρήσιμος).

derivation makes much more sense of the wide scope the moral sense of the words has. As Dover observes, πονηρός is frequently the antonym of ἀγαθός, ἐπιεικής, καλός, καλὸς κἀγαθός, σόφρων,²⁴³ and χρηστός often an antonym of μικρόψυχος and frequently treated as a synonym of ἐπιεικής and – most significantly – δίκαιος.²⁴⁴ This wide scope is hard to explain, if the operative connotation of the words was “beneficial service.”

This derivation of χρηστός and πονηρός also makes much better sense of the sociopolitical aspect the words assumed in the course of the fifth century. To close ranks against their demotic opponents, the aristocrats and nobility claimed the label χρηστοί (and its comparative and superlative βελτίους, βέλτιστοι)²⁴⁵ as their exclusive epithet, along with many others (e.g. ἀγαθοί/ἑσθλοί [and its comparative/superlative ἀμείνους, ἄριστοι], καλοὶ κἀγαθοί, εὐγενεῖς, γνώριμοι, πλούσιοι, ἐπιεικεῖς, ἐπιφανεῖς, οἱ ὀλίγοι, οἱ δυνατοί, κτλ).²⁴⁶ In so doing, they were claiming more than a label; they were laying an exclusive claim to virtue. Since moral goodness (ἀρετή) is inborn, it stands to reason that only they can be, in the true sense of the word, good (χρηστοί).²⁴⁷ The others, for their part, while recognizing their deficiency in wealth, birth and education, did not however acknowledge any inferiority in themselves on the score of ἀρετή. “No one,” Dover aptly comments, “ever says seriously ‘I am not *kalos kagathos*.’”²⁴⁸ This situation is sometimes treated as though it were a purely political debate, with two sides claiming the same label *and the same content of that label*.²⁴⁹ However, ordinary citizens cannot claim to be χρηστοί for the same reason as elite, well-born citizens can. They are socially,

²⁴³ 1974: 65.

²⁴⁴ 1974: 62-63, 65, 185.

²⁴⁵ For βελτίων, βέλτιστος as the degrees of comparison for χρηστός, see Dover 1974: 296, who cites D. 20.14.

²⁴⁶ Cf. Donlan 1980: 127. Reverdin 1945: 208-212 has a fairly exhaustive list.

²⁴⁷ See [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 2.19. Cf. Donlan’s remarks on the passage (1980: 145).

²⁴⁸ 1974: 43. Interestingly, Protagoras makes the same point in the *Protagoras* (323b). If anybody claims he is an unjust man, even if his fellow-citizens know him to be, still they will not believe him or consider him to be level-headed, but will suspect his sanity.

²⁴⁹ So Rosenbloom 2002: 300-312.

economically and genetically shut off from their type of moral goodness. The situation then is a debate, not a lexicographical one, but an ethical one. The definition of moral goodness, of χρηστότης and πονηρία themselves, is at issue, with one side offering the aristocratic code as a definition and the other re-defining it along broader lines.²⁵⁰

Χρηστός and πονηρός are weighty words. At root they denote operational integrity. True, what has operational integrity can prove to be useful, but that is an inference one degree removed from the actual fact of an object's compositional and operational integrity. It is this operational base, seen in both the etymological and concrete aspects of the adjectives, that made the words in time general terms of the broadest moral valuation, indicative of not much more than one's subjective disposition towards an object or person. In turn, this broad subjective import made the words ideal sociopolitical labels, when ethical warfare broke out in Athens.

6.2.3 “Good Things” and “Bad Things” for Protagoras

To return now to the *Theaetetus* passage, Protagoras had begun to explain the role of the σοφός by using the words ἀγαθός and κακός. He then realized his word choice might cause confusion and so selected different words for good and bad: χρηστός and πονηρός. There is reason to believe that Protagoras was particularly fond of these words. Versenyi points out that χρήματα in the human-measure dictum, deriving, as it does, from a verb meaning “to have dealing with” (χράομαι), aptly stresses our “attitude and relation to a thing, and not what that thing may or may not be in itself” (cf. subsection 2.1.1).²⁵¹ Χρηστός, derived from the same verb, would therefore be an appropriate label for that “attitude and relation to a thing,” that is, our perception and

²⁵⁰ For these “broader lines” as equality, legality, freedom and community, see Brock 1991: 167-169. For the view that it was an ethicality of *intent* that challenged the aristocratic ethicality of *external success*, see Donlan 1980: 113-119, 153.

²⁵¹ Versenyi 1962: 182.

judgment of a thing. Plato also suggests Protagoras made much use of both adjectives when in the *Protagoras* he has Socrates point out to Hippocrates that the young man wishes to receive good wares from Protagoras when neither he nor perhaps the sophist himself knows what good and bad is. Not only does he designate good and bad in this passage with χρηστόν and πονηρόν, but does so five times (313a-e, i.e. one Stephanus page). The tedious repetition of these words suggests Socrates is joking and, as Protagoras does indeed fail to understand what virtue is later in the dialogue, the joke is quite possibly aimed at Protagoras' (over-) use of the words.²⁵²

However, Protagoras may have a reason for selecting these words in the *Theaetetus* passage which escaped his critic Plato. The results of the discussion above (subsection 6.2.2) were that these words embody an ethical debate that is currently playing out in Athens. The Athenians are not at all agreed as to what a χρηστός ἀνὴρ and his opposite are. They naturally disagree also as to what things are χρηστά or πονηρά. Moreover, the disagreement, though basically ethical, intersects with the political sphere. There is a demotic and democratic definition of χρηστά and πονηρά and an elite and aristocratic definition. Cleon was the exemplar of πονηρία for the conservative citizens. Yet his advocates did not call him πονηρός and he certainly did not own the label himself. This debate then imparted an ambivalence to these epithets, or rather a political relativity. In the final analysis they do not mean much more than “what your side/my side considers ἀγαθόν or κακόν.” I suggest, therefore, that Protagoras, a keen observer of language, understood the subjective status of these words and so deliberately used them as synonyms of ἀγαθός and κακός in the *Theaetetus* passage (and elsewhere) because they allow him to plug in for good and bad the values “what X considers good” and “what X considers bad.”

²⁵² It is also worth noting that Hermogenes in the *Cratylus* rejects Protagoreanism because it fails to acknowledge a difference between people who are χρηστοί and people who are πονηροί (386a1-c5).

6.2.4 The Guarantor of the City's Opinion

This being the basic meaning of χρηστός and πονηρός in this passage,²⁵³ what is the role now of Protagoras' σοφὸς ῥήτωρ? Protagoras had said, according to my translation above:

For, I assert that the wise and good politicians cause good things (τὰ χρηστά) instead of bad things (τῶν πονηρῶν) to seem to be just to their cities. For, whatever sort of things seem just and honorable to a city, these things [I maintain] are in fact so for it, as long it holds them to be; but it is the wise politician who *made* those just and honorable things, when they each were bad things (πονηρῶν) to them, be and seem good things (χρηστά).

After plugging in the value “what the city considers good” for χρηστός and the value “what the city considers bad” for πονηρός, the following sense is yielded:

For, I assert that the wise and good politicians cause *what-the-city-considers-good things* instead of *what-the-city-considers-bad things* to seem to be just to their cities. For, whatever sort of things seem just and honorable to a city, these things [I maintain] are in fact so for it, as long it holds them to be; but it is the wise politician who *made* those just and honorable things, when they each were *what-the-city-considers-bad things* to them, be and seem *what-the-city-considers-good things*.

The role of Protagoras' wise politician is that of a supervisor. It is a Protagorean truism that the city creates its morality. The words δίκαια καὶ καλὰ are a hendiadys for morality in the same way that δίκη καὶ αἰδώς in the mythos stood for a city's ethicality. The wise politician does not tamper with this process. If he does, he risks imposing an individual's δόξα on the whole. And if he does that, the opinion of the city is fundamentally incorrect, inasmuch as it does not represent the genuine perception and judgment of the entirety of the population (see subsection 5.1.3). In that case, the correlation between reality and the assessors of reality would be broken. Any mediation is a perversion. Instead, the wise politician is guarantor of that accurate correlation. When he sees that the city is inclined to ratify a course of action it considers bad (and thereby stamp on it the status of just and honorable), he brings about a change so that it ratifies a course

²⁵³ This view assumes that Plato is working from a written text of Protagoras' work Ἀλήθεια. For evidence for this view, see Pl. *Tht.* 152a4, 161c4, 166c8, 166d1, 171a1, 171c5-7; *Cra.* 386c2-4.

of action it considers good. He makes sure the city determines to be just and honorable only those courses of action *the city itself* considers just and honorable. He is the advocate of the city's opinion, its δόξα. Such being his function, the title προστάτης τοῦ δήμου, as Connor interprets the label, fits him quite well. He is protector of the entire polis and "has the best interest of the citizenry at heart."²⁵⁴

Does this construal of Protagoras' wise politician run into the same problem for which I have faulted other construals (section 1.4)? That is, must this wise politician be committed beforehand to democracy in order to behave in this way? The answer is no. In order to present himself as this type of politician he does not have to be an avowed democrat. He only has to be committed already to Protagoras' relativist theory of morality and ethical correctness – a pre-commitment that is unproblematic and essential to Protagoras' justification of democracy.

Similarly, one should ask if this construal of the role of the politician privileges one group above others as more intelligent, as again other reconstructions have done (subsection 1.4.1). Here the answer is yes and no. The politician has insight because of his natural endowment and education. Yet that superiority of insight still does not justify any claim to greater weight in decision-making, since consensus, issuing genuinely from the citizen-body, is what makes something right (and even feasible). His education only acclimates him more to his environment, while his natural endowment only means he is more likeminded to the ancestors than others; they do not make him in any absolute terms more expert in the administration of cities. Thus Protagoras' theory neutralizes the superiority of his wise politicians and precludes the idea that they are objectively better, in either intellectual or ethical terms, than their poorer, less powerful, peers.

²⁵⁴ Connor 1971: 115.

6.2.5 Factional Division

In this passage Protagoras assumes a scenario in which the city is inclined to ratify a course of action it actually holds to be bad. This scenario does not a priori represent any and every meeting of the Assembly. Cases in which there is little disagreement over a bill reflect no such inclination on the part of the city to vote contrary to its actual opinion. Cases however where the city's opinion is obscure can be characterized as an inclination to ratify as just and honorable what the city does not in fact hold to be so.

On the whole, two scenarios of such obscurity can be envisioned: 1) When the minority view has a better turn out on the Pnyx. In Athens, this was always a possible occurrence. The usual estimate has only one-fifth of the total population vote on a given bill.²⁵⁵ That means the minority view could, given the right circumstances, be enacted. It was therefore imperative that decisions taken on the Pnyx represent the will of the whole Demos – an idea the Athenians took as a foregone conclusion.²⁵⁶ 2) When the opinions of the citizenry were equally divided.

When the citizens' views were more or less split 50/50, the actual opinion of the city was liable to be suppressed in favor of a view at variance with it. Thus the passage describes, not every instance of decision-making, but, as Vlastos rightly assumes,²⁵⁷ times of political disagreement at its worst. Protagoras' theory is concerned foremost with the resolution of factional division and the stabilization of the polis, not by make-shift means, but by the establishment of genuine concord and likemindedness.

²⁵⁵ Hansen 1976: 129-30.

²⁵⁶ Cf. Hdt. 5.97.2; [Pl.] Ax. 369a2. See also Hansen 1978: 127-46 and 1989: 101-6, who predicates his argument that the dikasteries of the 4th century were not institutionally identical with the Assembly (though they did represent, in a loose sense, the whole people [1989:106]), on the important piece of evidence that Athenian decrees, orators and historians overwhelmingly used δῆμος as a virtual synonym for the Assembly. In short, the 6,000 in the Assembly were for all intents and purposes, on the particular occasion, the δῆμος. "As an ideological construct...the assembly was conceived as *the whole* of the people, and not just a part" (1989: 104).

²⁵⁷ Vlastos 1956: xvi-xx.

Does this construal of the wise politician imply that the city can have perceptions and judgments that are mistaken? On an individual level, no. Protagoras never loses sight of the fact that in discussing the opinion of a city, he is dealing with the multiple opinions of multiple individuals, as is nicely illustrated by his referring to the polis with the masculine plural pronoun (αὐτοῖς) (167c6). In terms of the entire city, though, it is possible. But such cases of error are not epistemological. In the case of minority control of the Pnyx, it is logistical, while in cases of a 50/50 split, the city cannot be said, properly speaking, to have formed any judgment yet (cf. subsection 5.1.3).

The question remains: In cases where the citizens' opinions are equally divided – that is, when there is neither consensus nor a majority view – how is one to discover what the city considers χρηστόν or πονηρόν, what its “actual opinion” is? I discuss this question in chapters ten and eleven.

6.3 THE UTILITARIAN READING OF THE “DEFENSE”

This interpretation of Protagoras' wise politician as an advocate of the city's opinion is challenged by the Platonic interpretation of the *Theaetetus* passage which has been followed by a good many scholars.²⁵⁸ It contends that, when formulating the role of the wise politician, Protagoras abandons a relativistic position and adopts criteria based on benefit and advantage. This interpretation relies on: 1) the analogies the *Theaetetus* passage presents between the wise politician and a physician and farmer and 2) the fact that Socrates concludes Protagoras was a

²⁵⁸ Cornford 1935: 73; Kerferd 1945: 24-5; 1967: 91-3; 1981: 108; Guthrie 1971: 164-75; McDowell 1973: 40, 165-8; Müller 1986: 185; Schiappa 2003: 126-30; Chappell 2004: 105-7. Cf. Moser and Kustas 1966: 114.

relativist as far as moral values were concerned, but anything but, when it came to the expedient. Seen in the right light, however, these reasons do not prove compelling.

6.3.1 The Analogies

Protagoras compares the wise politician to the farmer who, when one of his plants is sick, imparts to it good, healthy and even true perceptions (167b7-c1). This statement appears to imply that the action the politician exerts on the city is as objectively beneficial as the farmer's curing of the sick plant. Similarly, when Protagoras compares the politician to the doctor who, when an ill patient tells him his food tastes bitter, makes his food taste agreeable, he appears to suggest that the wise politician can have perceptions which assess reality better than the totality of the city. However, one cannot treat these analogies as strictly parallel.²⁵⁹ The medical analogy is introduced to make the point that the wise politician, in order to bring the city from a “bad” opinion to a “good” opinion, must not teach or make the city smarter, but change its ἔξις. Furthermore, the horticultural analogy is much less developed than the scenario it is supposed to illuminate.

Be that as it may, the analogies do appear to assume a calculus of utility. It is hard, though, to agree with A. T. Cole that Plato misrepresents these analogies in order to extort from Protagoras a tacit assumption which he can then use to refute Protagoras.²⁶⁰ It is more likely that Plato's agenda was simply different and not directly concerned with expounding Protagorean doctrine. This is not to say, though, that the original point the analogies made cannot be recovered. Here the discussion above of χρηστός and πονηρός proves pertinent. Understanding χρηστόν to mean “what-X-considers-good” and πονηρόν the opposite not only suggests that

²⁵⁹ As for instance Cole 1966: 110-112, who accordingly sees discrepancies, and Burnyeat 1990: 25-27 do.

²⁶⁰ Cole 1966: 116-117.

these were indeed analogies used by Protagoras, but may also explain what he originally meant by them.

The first step one might take for a sick plant might be to water it. Now, if, as I have argued (subsection 2.1.2), Protagoras' ontology was, though objectivist, still so pluralistic that a thing's being, and its being a certain way (its essence and substance), depended upon the individual's assessment, then Protagoras must reject a globally beneficial value to water. So, while he would not deny that water encourages growth in plants, he can deny that water encourages growth in *all things*. This train of thought is patently erroneous, requiring one to think that because water helps plants grow, but does not encourage growth in other things (such as animal fur or human hair), it is not beneficial for growth at all. It is, on the other hand, understandable. In conceptualizing the biological world, Protagoras does not have the convenience of a Linnaean taxonomy. He classifies things not by common attributes, but by common function, e.g. things that grow, things that taste, etc. At the same time, the human *genus* is for him on the same plane as animal *genera* and even the plant kingdom. This peculiar (though not anachronistic) scientific outlook is in fact identical with the outlook assumed in the mythos Protagoras tells at the beginning of the Great Speech in the *Protagoras* (320c8-322d5).²⁶¹ There Epimetheus' distribution of body parts (thick fur, hard skin, hoofs and tough feet) to amorphous creatures suggests Protagoras had paid more attention to the individual parts themselves and their function, irrespective of biological differences, while his exposition of human intelligence and even human society as just a νόμος of the human creature comparable with the δυνάμεις given to the animals by Epimetheus, reveals a similar confusion between animal classes and orders. This scientific outlook of categorization by function, not by generic and special commonalities, might well have figured in the sophist's grammatical work as well. If he is categorizing the biological

²⁶¹ Cf. Denyer 2008: 103-4.

world according to its function, it would be no surprise, if he was in fact the first to define what a verb (ῥῆμα) is.²⁶²

There is more evidence that this is indeed the way Protagoras is thinking. After the Great Speech in the *Protagoras*, Socrates tries to prove that the individual virtues are actually one and the same thing. In the course of his elenchus that σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη share a common denominator (i.e. σοφία), he asks Protagoras if he considers things that are good (ἀγαθά) to be things that are beneficial (ὠφέλιμα) to humans (333d8-e1). Protagoras replies that he not only considers things beneficial to humans to be good, but even things that are not beneficial. Socrates asks for clarification: Does he mean things which are beneficial to no person are yet good or that things which are not beneficial *simpliciter* are yet good? Protagoras denies that things absolutely unbeneficial can be good but, lest he be obliged by his answers to equate the good and the beneficial, he points out that the same thing is not consistently beneficial. What is beneficial for humans may not be so for horses, oxen, dogs or plants. At this point he appears to categorize living organisms by taxonomic class. However, it becomes clear that this is not the case when he goes on to say that what is beneficial for one part of a plant is not so for another part, and ends the section by a description of olive oil: It is harmful for all plants and the bane of all animal hair except human hair, which it actually nourishes. Protagoras conceptualizes the biological world in terms of anatomical parts. Like the floating limbs of Empedocles (see subsection 3.3.4) and the animal attributes attached by Epimetheus, he is focusing more on the plant and animal parts that serve the same function than on the physiology peculiar to a class, order, family, genus or

²⁶² Cf. Guthrie 1971: 220. If he also first articulated the grammatical definition of λόγος as an ὄνομα and a ῥῆμα, then he would have in λόγος not only a convenient tool for describing the world, but a tangible mechanism for categorizing and defining the biological world. For Protagoras' interest in natural science *contra* the Platonic portrait, see Thomas 2000: 147-9.

species. A biological taxonomy based on function and failing to take into account generic and special differences makes it easier for him to relativize even physical properties.

These physical properties include the beneficial. Socrates had asked him if he considered things absolutely unbeneficial to be good (334a2). If Socrates can get him to deny this, then Protagoras will be obliged to admit an objective content to the good. Protagoras breaks free of the trap. While he admits the quality of being beneficial does indeed share in the quality of being good (334a3), he points out that the beneficiality of a thing (e.g. olive oil) depends on the member (man, plant, root, hair, etc.). In so doing, he is in effect denying that the beneficiality inheres in the thing itself (e.g. olive oil): οὕτω δὲ ποικίλον τί ἐστὶν τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ παντοδαπὸν (334b6-7). Protagoras argues that, if a thing's beneficiality did inhere in the thing, it would be beneficial across the board – for men, oxen, hair, roots, branches alike. Since it is not, it must not inhere in the thing. The beneficial, like all other properties, is relative. Mistaken though the argument may be, it is entirely consistent with his understanding and scientific outlook on the biological world.

An important question now comes to the fore: If the beneficial does not inhere in the thing, how does one account for the undeniable phenomenon of a thing's proving beneficial? In order to explain this question, Protagoras needs to expound his theory of relativism. It appears therefore that Mansfeld is right when he suggests that, if the lively applause of the audience and Socrates' impatience at (what he calls)²⁶³ a long speech had not derailed the conversation, "a discussion of the implications of the man-measure principle" would have followed.²⁶⁴ As it is, Socrates refuses to be led down that path. His stated reason is that he has another engagement

²⁶³ Cf. Havelock 1957: 206: "[T]he accusation of long-windedness is grotesque."

²⁶⁴ Mansfeld 1981: 44. Mansfeld also sees a verbal allusion here to the human-measure claim. See fn. 121.

(335c2-7).²⁶⁵ In terms of strategy, his dialectic mode has once again proven ineffective and he is attempting to approach his opponent in a different mode.²⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Protagoras' attempt to broach the topic of relativism at this juncture in the dialogue echoes the point that he did not exclude what is beneficial from the human measure.

In this way Protagoras argues for the relative status of not only moral values, but even of what is beneficial by the empirical argument that the quality of the beneficial is evidently not inherent in the actual things. The Cyrenaic school made a similar argument. An important implication of their major tenet that only the feelings were comprehensible was the denial that human cognition of externals was veridical. In order to demonstrate our error in judging externals, they gave, according to Plutarch, the following proof (*Adv. Col.* 1120b):

If honey is sweet and the olive shoot bitter and hail cold and neat wine warm and the sun bright and the mist of night dark, the opposite account is given by many animals, circumstances and people, since some disdain honey, and others welcome olive shoots and burn up in hail and feel freezing because of wine and have dim sight in the sun and see at night.

Because different animals and people and even inanimate objects (πράγματα) have different perceptions even of things as quantifiably measurable as sunlight, the Cyrenaics maintained that these attributes did not inhere in the things. Their biological outlook had the same limitations that Protagoras' did, and led them to similar conclusions.

Whether or not Protagoras argues for a relative value to the beneficial in this passage has been the subject of debate. Taylor believes he does; Vlastos and Mansfeld think the passage is prelude to a discussion of relativism.²⁶⁷ Challenging this view Kerferd, along with Moser and Kustas, believes Protagoras actually enunciates a utilitarian view.²⁶⁸ The similarity of

²⁶⁵ However, as the prologue (309a1-310a7) shows, Socrates has a great deal of leisure.

²⁶⁶ For the transition from a dialectic mode of argumentation to a didactic, see Allen 2006: 30.

²⁶⁷ Taylor 1937: 251; Vlastos 1956: xvi n32; Mansfeld 1981: 44.

²⁶⁸ Kerferd 1949: 24; Moser and Kustas 1966: 114.

Protagoras' argument with Cyrenaic argumentation on the same topic suggests that Vlastos and Mansfeld are right. The fact that the Cyrenaics, a school epistemologically similar to Protagoras, used the same argument to challenge the notion of inherent values is another reason that suggests Protagoras used the argument for the similar purpose of defending his relativism.²⁶⁹

It appears then quite plausible that, historically speaking, Protagoras did explain a thing's beneficiality with reference to his relativism. But, again, how did he account for a thing's undeniable beneficiality? I suggest that he had recourse to the local ethicalities and his anthropological definition of the human being. Benefit being contingent on the properties a thing has, and their properties being dependent for what they are on the individual's perception, it would seem to follow for Protagoras that what is beneficial is just a description of how a thing is. And since the way one perceives a thing has been subjected to environmental conditioning to the point that the adult individual is predisposed to feel and think like his environment (to a degree), the "undeniable" beneficiality of a thing is simply the product of the "intersubjective truth" of the community. Were one suddenly transported to the Hyperboreans, he might be surprised to see that honey there is considered disgusting and that the locals do not die from temperatures he considers unbearable. In this way one might say that for Protagoras the individual creates the physical world, but the individual's environment creates the individual.

In sum, the analogies that Protagoras draws at *Tht.* 167a-c between the wise politician on the one hand, and the physician and farmer on the other, do not commit Protagoras, or his wise politician, to a utilitarian doctrine. On the contrary, once one takes into account the character of Protagoras' scientific outlook, they suggest that Protagoras regarded the quality of being beneficial just as relative an attribute as color or smell or flavor.

²⁶⁹ For Protagoras' possible influence on the Cyrenaics, see Guthrie 1962-1981: vol. III, 494-499 (especially 497 n1). See above (subsection 6.1.2 & fn. 225) for Protagoras' use of a Cyrenaic tenet in the defense.

6.3.2 The testimony of Socrates

Besides the analogies, the other argument that Protagoras espoused a utilitarian view in the *Theaetetus* passage was the fact that *Socrates concludes* Protagoras did so. He was a relativist, Socrates asserts, as far as moral values were concerned, but anything but a relativist, when it came to the expedient (169d3-8, 172a1c1, 177c7-d6). However, it has been argued that Socrates' treatment of Protagoras is problematic. Specifically, Cole argues that Socrates delivers a defense of Protagoras in which no doctrine of utility is expressed; then, in the course of restating the content of the defense, tacitly injects the calculus of utility.²⁷⁰ This interpretation has found some support, most notably in Burnyeat.²⁷¹ A brief analysis of Socrates' treatment, with particular attention paid to the heavy dose of irony infused in the passage, suggests that Cole and Burnyeat are in the main correct.

6.4 SOCRATIC IRONY

Socrates begins the examination proper of Protagoras' human-measure claim by pointing out a possible contradiction it makes. If everybody's perception/judgment is incorrigible, then nobody is properly wiser than another; if nobody is wiser than another, nobody can presume to be a teacher of another. Yet Protagoras was incontrovertibly a teacher. There is thus an inconsistency between Protagoras' philosophy and his profession. How can one resolve this problem? Socrates suggests a few solutions. One, more implied in jest than offered seriously, is that Protagoras suffered from a Caligulan megalomania and considered himself a god (161c8, 162a1-3). Another is that he was pandering to the crowd and, since he denotes his pandering by the word δημόομαι,

²⁷⁰ Cole 1966: 117; 1972: 27.

²⁷¹ Burnyeat 1990: 31-33.

one suspects Socrates means a primarily democratic crowd (161e4). He then deploys a *reductio ad absurdum* to undermine Protagoras' human-measure claim, insofar as it is equivalent with Theaetetus' definition of knowledge as perception (*Tht.* 151e1-3). Since perceiving is knowing, then seeing too is knowing. But when one recollects a thing, since he does not literally see the thing, he cannot be said to know the thing. Therefore, remembering a thing is not knowing a thing – a proposition, one might feel, *per se* absurd (163d1-164b9).

At this point, however, Socrates feels some compunction. He has been testing Protagoras' doctrine superficially and verbally (164c7-d1). He begins to feel sorry for Protagoras' doctrine and likens it to an orphan bereft of father and even a guardian, since Theodorus, a former student of Protagoras, refuses to protect the foundling. He himself therefore will undertake the defense of Protagoras' human-measure claim (164e2-6). However, this "defense" is highly ironical. Socrates says he will help Protagoras (164e6). But he will help him, not by showing how the incorrigibility of human judgment is consistent with his professional position as a teacher, but by showing that in actuality he made no such claim that human judgment is incorrigible. In other words, he will argue Protagoras' relativism committed him to an (epistemologically) objectivist position. That is why he could claim to be a teacher of others. Thus Protagoras' position as a teacher is vindicated at the expense of everything Protagoras taught!

6.4.1 The Language of the Direct Testimony

Socrates begins his defense by giving Protagoras' direct testimony in the first person. At first glance, it appears Socrates uses the first person to alleviate the tedium of this very un-dramatic dialogue. As it turns out, however, the use of the first person is an integral part of Socrates' ironic proof that Protagoras was no relativist.

Upon completing his direct testimony, Protagoras (as quoted by Socrates) believes he has exonerated himself of the charge of inconsistency. That he believes his human-measure doctrine has been vindicated is clear when he tells Socrates he must accept being a measure, whether he wishes it or not (167d1-4). Socrates, however, once he begins to speak *in propria persona* again, interprets the same words in an entirely different way. He tells Theodorus that the two of them were wrong to take issue with Protagoras' claim that everybody's perception and judgment were incorrigible (αὐτάρκη ἕκαστον εἰς φρόνησιν), because Protagoras made no such claim. He actually maintained that certain individuals differ from others on the score of what is better and worse, and these are the ones who are wise (169d3-8).

There is then a discrepancy between Socrates and Protagoras as to what the direct testimony had meant. The discrepancy is apparent in Socrates' words to Theodorus as well. He adds the word "worse" (χείρονος),²⁷² where Protagoras had studiously avoided it, and speaks of Protagoras' testimony as a concession (συνεχώρησεν), though it clearly was not.²⁷³ In short, Protagoras concludes the human-measure is vindicated on the basis of words Socrates gives him, while Socrates on the basis of the same words thinks the same doctrine is disavowed by the sophist. This disconnect at first glance might seem disconcerting, but upon closer inspection simply proves to be due to Socrates' irony. Being facetious, he is using, not just ideas, but language as well which Protagoras actually used against Protagoras in order to "prove" he did not teach what he in fact taught.

This point is borne out in the courtroom-style hypophora that follows. Socrates soon pauses to express a concern: Somebody might claim that Protagoras, were he present, would have said no such thing, but that Socrates had put words in his mouth; therefore, Socrates must

²⁷² See above, fn. 226.

²⁷³ Cf. Chappell 2004: 109n87.

prove Protagoras taught that judgments were indeed corrigible (i.e. that the human individual is NOT the measure) from Protagoras' own philosophy (169d10-170a1). McDowell remarks that this hypophora suggests the content of the direct testimony is not authentic material.²⁷⁴ When the hypothetical objector claims Protagoras would not have said any such thing, he, a Protagorean, is asserting that he does not recognize the language of the direct testimony.

However, Socrates is simply assuming that this objector understands the direct testimony just as he himself did – as indeed he must. If the objector had said: “Protagoras *did* use those words, but you have drawn the wrong conclusion from them,” Socrates could not keep the irony going. True, he could still prove that Protagorean relativism is self-contradictory, but he could not “prove” that Protagoras himself thought so, too. Yet that is the ironic leitmotif of the passage: to “exonerate” Protagoras of the hybris in which the human-measure claim implicates him. It is therefore integral to Socrates' irony that the language of the direct testimony be at one and the same time recognizable, and objectionable, to a Protagorean. This Protagorean, who wishes to “condemn” Protagoras of relativism, must deny that the language is Protagoras', in order that the historical reality that it was indeed the language Protagoras used can “convict” this Protagorean of being wrong in asserting that Protagoras was, as indeed he was, a relativist. In other words, the whole point of this mock courtroom scene is to use Protagoras' words against him. The words therefore must be authentic, if the irony is to have any point. Thus, once the irony is taken into account, the hypophora is actually an argument for the authenticity of the direct testimony.

6.4.2 The Peritropē

Socrates soon proceeds to a second proof that Protagoras did not hold the human-measure doctrine. This one will not be direct testimony, but a demonstration culled from his own

²⁷⁴ 1973: 169.

philosophy. This proof is a “turning of the tables” (περιτροπή) on Protagoras. The majority, Socrates begins, believes there is such a thing as a wiser individual (170a6-c8). If Protagoras agrees with them, then there is a wiser individual (170e9-171a1). If he does not, then one of two results follows: He must recognize the belief of the majority as a provisional truth.²⁷⁵ If *they* think there is a wiser person, although he himself does not, he can still claim to be a teacher by virtue of *their* opinion. However, this position would not inspire much confidence in a prospective student. So, he should probably justify his profession in another way. He could contend that, since everybody else thinks there is a wiser person, they are *necessarily* right, because they are the measure of all things; and for the same reason his claim, that there is no-one wiser than another, is mistaken. In other words, Protagoras’ human-measure claim commits him to the opinion of the majority.

The success of this περιτροπή has been called into question. Vlastos remarks that Socrates reaches his conclusion only by omitting the very important qualifier “for” at 171a8-b7. Thus, he does not speak of what is true *for the many* or *for Protagoras*, but what is true *simpliciter*.²⁷⁶ The efficiency of the περιτροπή is not, however, relevant to the matter at hand.²⁷⁷ What matters here is the position it holds in the overall polemic. Just as the direct testimony showed Protagoras’ own words “denied” the human-measure, and so justified his profession as teacher, so the περιτροπή shows how Protagoras could use his human-measure claim to “deny” his human-measure claim, and justify his legitimacy to teach. In other words, Socrates is still being ironical and has “proven” on the basis of Protagoras’ own philosophy that the Abderite did not really believe his own philosophy.

²⁷⁵ Cf. Chappell 2004: 112.

²⁷⁶ Vlastos 1956: xiv, n27.

²⁷⁷ Burnyeat 1976 contends Plato’s reasoning is sound even though the qualifiers are dropped. Chappell 1995: 338 argues Plato’s περιτροπή does not prove Protagoras’ doctrine to be self-refuting, though it does suggest it is self-defeating.

6.4.3 Protagoras the Socratic

After – and as a result of – these two highly ironical “proofs,” Socrates and Theodorus agree that Protagoras conceded (171d507)²⁷⁸ that one was wiser than another, and one was more ignorant than another (and so that Protagoras did not mean any sort of complete relativism by his human-measure claim). Socrates can now move on to his second contention, viz. that Protagoras considered the beneficial and expedient to have objective value. As noted above, Socrates believes the direct testimony had proved this (i.e. that Protagoras believed in an objective beneficialness), but the presence of an objector had suggested Protagoras held no such view. Now that he has “proven” Protagoras considered one could be wiser than another, he argues that this claim of Protagoras would be untenable unless he recognized an objective value in the beneficial and expedient, which is, he comments, the way he interpreted the direct testimony all along: ἢ καὶ ταύτῃ ἂν μάλιστα ἴστασθαι τὸν λόγον, ἢ ἡμεῖς ὑπεγράψαμεν βοηθοῦντες Πρωταγόρᾳ κτλ; (171d9-e1). As regards the human body, this means Protagoras must have considered the healthy and unhealthy to have objective value; as regards the civilized community, it means:

καλὰ μὲν καὶ αἰσχροὶ καὶ δίκαια καὶ ἄδικοι καὶ ὅσια καὶ μή, οἷα ἂν ἐκάστη πόλις οἰηθεῖσα θῆται νόμιμα αὐτῇ, ταῦτα καὶ εἶναι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ ἐκάστη...ἐν δὲ τῷ συμφέροντα ἑαυτῇ ἢ μὴ συμφέροντα τίθεσθαι, ἐνταυθ', εἴπερ που, αὐτὸ ὁμολογήσει σύμβουλόν τε συμβούλου διαφέρειν καὶ πόλεως δόξαν ἑτέραν ἑτέρας πρὸς ἀλήθειαν (172a1-8).

Socrates has taken liberties. Since Protagoras, he says, did believe one could be quantifiably wiser than another, *it stands to reason* that he must have recognized some standard as objective.

²⁷⁸ This passage is obscure. The Greek runs: καὶ δεῖται καὶ νῦν ἄλλο τι φῶμεν ὁμολογεῖν ἂν τοῦτό γε ὀντινοῦν, τὸ εἶναι σοφώτερον ἕτερον ἑτέρου, εἶναι δὲ καὶ ἀμαθέστερον; It is usually translated as for example Chappell 2004: 118 does: “Anyone at all would agree that some people are wiser than others, and some people are more ignorant.” However, what anybody (ὀντινοῦν) would concede is not at issue. In fact, it is quite immaterial. What is at issue is what Protagoras himself would concede. Therefore, a better translation is: “And so aren’t we to say that anybody at all would grant our point *as to the fact that* one is wiser and one more ignorant than another” – “our point” being of course “that Protagoras thought so.” In other words, the articular infinitive serves as a shorthand expression for the theme of the passage, not a mere equivalent to an indirect statement.

But the first premise is unacceptable, because it entails the total denial of the human-measure claim. The second premise, therefore, since it depends on the first, is unacceptable, too.

Protagoras recognized an objective value to the expedient *if and only if* he recognized the existence of a better and worse assessment of reality (i.e. a wiser person) *at the expense of* his human-measure claim. In short, Socrates intensely ironic argument amounts to this: Protagoras did consider what is beneficial and expedient to be objective because he really did not assert the human-measure claim.

In this way an analysis of the *Theaetetus* passage that pays close attention to the irony of the context suggests that Cole and Burnyeat are correct. Socrates foists on Protagoras the doctrine of utility. However, he is being ironical, not, as Cole says, “unfair.”²⁷⁹ His irony has point. It highlights the incompatibility of Protagoras’ human-measure claim and any notion of utility as it was (and is) traditionally understood. Theaetetus is his audience. The young man is to realize from this discussion that he has a choice. Either perceiving is knowing or what is expedient is so *simpliciter*; but one cannot have both. And moreover Socrates himself implies that Protagoras himself knew very well that these two ideas were incompatible, not only when he introduces a hypothetical Protagorean to object to his direct testimony, but also when he distinguishes Protagoras’ teachings from contemporary Protagoreans ὅσοι γε ἂν μὴ παντάπασιν τὸν Πρωταγόρου λόγον λέγωσιν (172b6-7). These “incomplete Protagoreans,” as Cole labels them,²⁸⁰ do admit the calculus of utility, which suggests that Protagoras didn’t. In what follows Socrates drives home the point he has been making with another, more weighty,²⁸¹ argument: Considerations of future benefit prove the expert has a more accurate assessment of all reality (177c6-179b9). But this argument represents a new direction. Regarding Protagoras himself, the

²⁷⁹ Cole 1966: 117.

²⁸⁰ Ibid. 113.

²⁸¹ At least in the opinion of Theodorus (179b6-9).

damage has been done. Socrates has had fun with him. In a passage dripping with irony, he has shown Protagoras did not really espouse anything near a relativist philosophy. On the contrary, he recognized the calculus of utility and therefore was, for all intents and purposes, a good Socratic.²⁸²

6.5 CONCLUSION

In sum, the utilitarian Protagoras in the *Theaetetus* is a mirage brought on by Socrates' irony. It might strike one as too playful or too *ad hominem*, but Socrates has a real point: A relativist philosophy, such as Protagoras', and a philosophy that interprets the good as the beneficial, are incompatible. If Theaetetus persists in his original definition of knowledge, he will fail to make any provision for the beneficial – a troubling idea for Socrates.

Nevertheless, behind the irony the real Protagoras is discernible. Specifically, one can still gather what he taught the role of the politician in a community of consensus to be. He was to be the advocate of the city's opinion. In times of doubt, when the city's opinion was obscure and various viewpoints laid claim to being its actual opinion, he determined which of these viewpoints was most consistent with the city's ethical environment. In this way, he made sure that what the city determined to be just and honorable, was in fact a thing it actually considered "good" (χρηστόν). In this way Protagoras accounted for leadership in the community of consensus without undermining the consensus doctrine. What the city deems just and honorable is so, for as long as it so deems. The fact that there are leaders in this city is not a problem. They do not impose their will by force or speech on the citizens. Rather, they isolate the opinion that is consistent with the city's ethicality and advocate for it.

²⁸² For Socrates and the place of the useful in his teachings, see Pl. *Grg.* 470a9-c3, *Rep.* 336c6-d4.

7.0 PROTAGORAS AND PERICLES

In the previous chapters I have set forth an interpretation of the democratic political theory which I suggest Protagoras developed on the basis of his doctrine of relativism. It remains to see if this political theory exerted any actual influence on the Athenian democracy. While it certainly is not responsible for the origin of democracy, and just as certainly did not contribute to the inestimable boost Ephialtes gave it in the late 460s, but on the contrary was influenced and inspired by those reforms, it did have a role in the ultimate direction Periclean democracy in time took. The presence of Protagorean ideas in the funeral speech of Pericles suggests that Thucydides was well aware of a Protagorean element in the democracy of the second half of the fifth century and that it was part of his historical agenda to draw attention to it.

However, before discussing the Protagorean contours and colors Thucydides applies to his portrait of Pericles, it is important to revisit the evidence regarding Protagoras' life and his relationship with Pericles, in order to make sure such a view for Thucydides is historically possible. A new reconstruction of Protagoras' life will not only suggest that the two men shared a friendship, but that Protagoras occupied an informal advisory position in the friendship. An analysis of other evidence confirms this conclusion. Plutarch transmits a very important piece of gossip about the two men, and Plato in his *Protagoras* exploits their relationship as an opportunity for a subtle subversion of Protagoras' educational ideas. Seeing then that the evidence suggests Pericles, Athens' σύμβουλος *par excellence*, had himself a σύμβουλος in

Protagoras, it should come as no surprise, if Thucydides drew a portrait of Pericles in which he incorporated Protagorean elements.

7.1 CHRONOLOGY OF PROTAGORAS' LIFE

The most relevant in-depth analysis of the evidence for Protagoras' life is still the studies done by Morrison and Davison.²⁸³ However, as important as these studies are, especially in determining the dates of Protagoras' birth and death, they fail to weed out suspect information and to take account of other information that could bring Protagoras' residencies and movements into greater focus. In this section I attempt to do just that; and the results are suggestive. In brief, they are hardly explicable unless a close, informally advisory relationship between the two men is granted.

7.1.1 Birth

At the end of the twentieth century Theodor Gomperz questioned Johann Frei's more or less canonical date of c. 480 for the birth of Protagoras by pointing out that it made Protagoras' remark at *Prt.* 317c3 (viz. that he was old enough to be the father of everybody present), hard to believe, since Socrates was born in 469.²⁸⁴ He therefore suggested a date of c. 485. This suggestion found approval for a while,²⁸⁵ but was finally challenged by J. A. Davison, who objected that it assumed Protagoras to be speaking in terms of strict puberty.²⁸⁶ Since he believed that Eupolis' *Kolakes* placed Protagoras in Athens in the archon year of 422/1 and since

²⁸³ Morrison 1941: 1-7; Davison 1953: 33-38. At any rate, recent biographical discussions rely heavily on one or the other or both (see, e.g., Schiappa 2003: 217-8).

²⁸⁴ Frei 1845: 64; Gomperz 1898: 471. For Socrates' date of birth, see D.L. 2.44.

²⁸⁵ E. g. Morrison 1941: 4.

²⁸⁶ 1953: 35.

moreover Plato again is witness that Protagoras lived more than 70 years (*Meno* 91e), he suggested a date of birth of 492 or 491. This date was followed by von Fritz and has since not been challenged.²⁸⁷ Although there is always danger in taking Plato literally, Davison's reasoning appears sound. Since Plato knew Socrates' age (*Crito* 52e3) and had set the *Protagoras* in 433/2 BC²⁸⁸ a few years before the well-known date of a major event (i.e. the Peloponnesian war), a fair degree of precision can be expected from the remark he puts in Protagoras' mouth.

The sources agree that he was born in Abdera on the Thracian coast some fifty miles east of Amphipolis. The one noteworthy exception is a fragment from Eupolis' *Kolakes* which designates him as Teian (fr.147 *PCG*), but in light of the unique relationship between Abdera and Teos this is little problem. Around 545 BC the Teians abandoned their city and founded Abdera, then some years later re-founded Teos by sending a colony to the mother site, with which they remained united in a *sympoliteia*.²⁸⁹ Eupolis is most likely making a joking reference to this special relationship.

It has been suggested that in the years 480 to 450, if not earlier, Abdera and Teos were beginning to build a democratic government. The argument depends on the interpretation of Teian imprecation decrees in which the αἰσυνήτης (elective ruler) receives negative treatment, any judicial decision to put a citizen to death requires a quorum (200 at Teos, 500 at Abdera) and the liability of the magistrates upon failure to have these decrees recited and enforced is emphasized.²⁹⁰ If the Abderites were already moving in a democratic direction as early as 480,

²⁸⁷ von Fritz 1957: 908-909; Schiappa 2003: 217-8.

²⁸⁸ See below, fn. 343.

²⁸⁹ See Robinson 2011: 140-145.

²⁹⁰ Ibid: 140-145.

then it means that Protagoras was early on exposed to the ideas, as well as to the problems, involved in democracy.

Philostratus tells how Protagoras' father played host to Xerxes in 480 and in exchange received Persian magi as instructors for his son, then a παῖς (VS 1.10). This for him helps explain Protagoras' agnosticism, since Persian magi customarily refrained from saying anything definite about the gods in public (VS 1.10). Interestingly, Diogenes Laertius records the very same story as an event in the boyhood of Democritus (9.34). As long as the date of birth of neither Protagoras nor Democritus appeared to square with this story, it was assumed to be a total fabrication which Diogenes, not Philostratus, rightly recorded as belonging to the biographical tradition of Democritus.²⁹¹ However, now that a date of birth before 490 for Protagoras seems likely, it appears that Philostratus was right after all and that it was Diogenes who was mistaken.²⁹² Von Fritz suggests that this instruction exposed the young Protagoras to Persian customs and religion which, as a horizon-broadening experience, exerted a formative influence in the later development of his relativism.²⁹³

Epicurus called Protagoras a porter (φορμοφόρος) (ap. D.L. 9.53) and in a Hesychian scholion to Plato's *Republic* he was once a φορτοβαστάκτης.²⁹⁴ On that note he is said to have invented a shoulder-pad for carrying loads, the τύλη (D.L. 9.53), and to have devised an ingenious way of binding wood into a bundle (Gell. 5.3).²⁹⁵ Although the fact that the Hesychian scholion and Gellius include the erroneous tradition that Protagoras was Democritus' pupil greatly reduces the likelihood of these stories, still the tradition of Protagoras as a porter is

²⁹¹ See Wright's comment (1921: 32n2) for an example of the view at this time.

²⁹² Cf. Davison 1953: 33-34 and Kerferd 1981: 42.

²⁹³ von Fritz 1957: 911. Davison 1953: 34 likewise believes the story to belong to the biographical tradition of Protagoras and to serve as evidence for a pre-490 birth, but is more reluctant than von Fritz to accept it as fact.

²⁹⁴ = DK 80 A3. In Aulus Gellius the word is ἄχθοφόρος (5.3).

²⁹⁵ Cf. Ath. 8.354c (= DK 68 A9) who says Epicurus asserted Protagoras was also Democritus' private secretary. It appears Diogenes and Athenaeus are referring to the same "Epicurean" letter, since according to Athenaeus Epicurus called Protagoras a φορμοφόρος (as well as a ξυλοφόρος).

interesting in its own right. As I have argued in chapters one through six, Protagoras' formulation of human society and morality reduced virtue, both political and moral, to an outlook or frame of mind that one's environment conditions. Originally that outlook derives from an unconditioned, biological, perhaps even natural, assessment of reality; but the mere fact that one is born at a later date in an already advanced community means that his environment will determine his outlook more than his own thought. As a result of this determinism, virtue for Protagoras is effectively a trade-skill, a τέχνη, learned like other τέχναι, by societal apprenticeship and cultural osmosis. It is therefore entirely believable that Protagoras was actually in the habit of comparing, as Plato has him do (*Prt.* 328a), the way the young learn virtue to the way sons of craftsmen (χειροτέχναι) learn their fathers' craft. The tradition of Protagoras as a porter may very well be a vestige of both his theory (as well as the analogies he was fond of using to propound that theory) and the insults and witticisms that his manner of speaking encouraged. This type of misrepresentation, obviously aiming at arousing laughter, possibly had its origin in Attic comedy.²⁹⁶

7.1.2 Life

At *Meno* 91e3-9 Socrates asserts that Protagoras plied his trade for “more than forty years.” For, he says, he believes he died around seventy years of age after practicing his profession for forty years. It seems strange that Plato would know when Protagoras began to teach, unless that time was somehow easily datable for Plato. It has therefore been suggested that this statement from

²⁹⁶ Protagoras was one of Callias' flatterers in Eupolis' Κόλακες (see *PCG* s. l., fr. 157, 158), whose poverty (τὰ δὲ χαμᾶθεν ἐσθίει) would be consistent with a lowly, banausic occupation.

Socrates reflects the time when Protagoras first arrived at Athens.²⁹⁷ If this is correct, then Protagoras will have first arrived at Athens in 462 or 461 BC.

There is very good circumstantial evidence to recommend this as the date of Protagoras' arrival. It was in the archon year of 462/1 that Ephialtes had the measures passed that deprived the Areopagus of many of its traditional powers and transferred them to the Council, Assembly and Courts.²⁹⁸ This transference of powers amounted to an overhaul of the Athenian state.²⁹⁹ The presidency of the Assembly was taken away from the board of archons who, by the rule that made them members of the Areopagus after their term of office, had *de facto*, if not formal, obligations to the Areopagites, and was entrusted to a rotating subcommittee of fifty men drawn from the Council.³⁰⁰ These *prytaneis*, representing three of the four Solonian property brackets, presided over the entire legislative process of the Athenian state. Furthermore, the vetting of incoming officials (*dokimasia*) and the examination of outgoing officials (*euthyna*) was given to the jury-courts which all four property brackets occupied.³⁰¹ If Wade-Gery is right in suggesting that at this time the Courts were not only enlarged, but actually created, that the *Heliaea* which had up to now been an appeals courts, was transformed by Ephialtes into the court of first and last instance, then these measures can indeed be called "an experiment of committing justice to the unlearned" (see subsection 1.2.3).³⁰² But Wade-Gery's phrase only captures half of the situation. Not only had the judicial branch been entrusted to the free, adult male population in its entirety, but the legislative had as well, and in four years the executive branch would be opened

²⁹⁷ Morrison 1941: 5; Davison 1953: 37. Cf. Kerferd 1981: 43.

²⁹⁸ *Ath. Pol.* 25.

²⁹⁹ See Rhodes 1985a: 144-207, 203-205 for arguments for, and 1992: 67-75 for a strong statement of, this position on the Ephialtean reforms. For a counter view (i.e. that Ephialtes merely had the vetting and examination of officials transferred to the Council), see Sealey 1981: 311, 323-4.

³⁰⁰ Rhodes 1992: 71-79.

³⁰¹ Rhodes 1992: 71. So too Sealey 1981: 323-4.

³⁰² Wade-Gery 1958: 192. Cf. Smith 1925: 118-9; Rhodes 1985a: 168-9, 204n1, 210.

up to the third Solonian bracket, the *zeugitae*.³⁰³ Many Athenian citizens were doing what Athenian citizens had never done before. It was the perfect opportunity for an educator, as more Athenians now than ever needed basic instruction in the practical skills of delivering, and (perhaps more importantly) in critiquing, a speech and in civic administration as well.

Moreover, it was the ideal time for Protagoras' particular brand of instruction. The measures the Athenians had ratified placed an enormous amount of responsibility on the average Athenian. The most pressing problem this new responsibility posed was how one was going to fulfill his public duties on top of his domestic obligations. Protagoras' courses were a direct answer to this concern. At *Prt.* 318e5ff he sums up what he teaches in the word εὐβουλία, good decision-making, which he promises to teach in the management of both one's private estate and of the city at large. He contrasts his instruction with that of other sophists, in this case Hippias, who teach their students useless abstractions (318d9-e5). It has been suggested that Protagoras' political thought, while it advocated democracy, demanded a specialized, elite leadership within that democracy.³⁰⁴ On the contrary, Protagorean εὐβουλία was a curriculum targeting the amateur politician whose time was divided between Assembly and farmstead, office-holding and shop-keeping. As such, it was particularly at home in the year 462/1, when the issue of the feasibility of part-time politics would have been first raised.

7.1.3 Thurii

The next recorded event in Protagoras' life occurred some seventeen years later. Heraclides of Pontus is witness, in his work *On Laws*, that Protagoras "wrote laws for Thurii" (ap. D.L.

³⁰³ *Ath. Pol.* 26.2. His name was Mnesitheides, who served as archon in 457/6.

³⁰⁴ Cf. Morrison 1941:16 (a "led democracy") and Farrar 1988: 71-87.

9.50).³⁰⁵ Thurii was founded in the archonship of Praxiteles (444/3 BC).³⁰⁶ The significance this fact has on the life of Protagoras is bound up closely with the question of whether or not Athens played a leading role in its colonization and, if so, whether Pericles was instrumental in that decision.

In keeping with his thesis that democracy was a Greek, not just an Athenian, phenomenon, Eric Robinson argues that the role Athens played in the foundation of Thurii and its democratic constitution was minimal.³⁰⁷ However, this argument turns a blind eye to a great deal of evidence. According to Diodorus Siculus, the Sybarites were driven from their city a second time in 448/7 (11.9).³⁰⁸ The Sybarites appealed to Sparta to help them regain their city. When the Spartans refused to help, the Sybarites asked the Athenians. At this point the sequence of events becomes problematic. Diodorus relates that 1) the Athenians send ten ships under Lampon and Xenocritus, at the same time inviting Peloponnesian individuals to join; 2) Lampon and Xenocritus then select the site in accordance with a Delphic oracle; 3) they build the city; 4) the new colonists, called Thurians by Diodorus, quarrel with the Sybarites because these insist on special privileges; 5) the new colonists kill the Sybarites and establish a democracy (9.10-11).

This sequence clearly omits some clarifying details; but the question is if it compresses two events. V. Ehrenberg argues it does, relying on a passage from Strabo which gives a different sequence of events. According to Strabo, 1) Athenians and other Greeks re-found Sybaris with the Sybarites; 2) they soon conceive contempt for the Sybarites; 3) they kill them; 4) they then move the community to a new site and name it Thurii. Reconciling the two

³⁰⁵ It is sometimes claimed Heraclides said he wrote *the* laws for Thurii (e.g. Ehrenberg 1948: 168; Robinson 2011: 120), which he clearly did not say.

³⁰⁶ [Plut.] *VDO* 835c. Cf. Ehrenberg 1948: 150; Andrewes 1978: 6.

³⁰⁷ 2011: 119-122.

³⁰⁸ In 510 BC they had been defeated and driven into exile by the Crotoniates, led by Milo, the renowned Olympic victor, dressed as Heracles. Then, fifty-eight years later (in 452), they re-settled the site, but five years later (448/7) were again driven out.

accounts, Ehrenberg suggests that there was an initial re-colonization of Sybaris in 446/4 that went terribly wrong and a subsequent relocation of the colonists to Thurii in 444/3.³⁰⁹

The problem with this reconstruction is that, in following Strabo in placing the foundation of Thurii shortly after the failed re-settling of Sybaris, one must also place the establishment of a democratic government after the relocation. This in turn means that the original Athenian colonists agreed, when departing for Sybaris, to live in a non-democratic government. It is hard to believe the Athenian demographic that typically found colonization appealing would agree to that condition.³¹⁰ Strabo knew Sybaris and Thurii were two different sites.³¹¹ He also knew there had been a quarrel. He has simply inferred that the change of name was due to the quarrel.

³⁰⁹ Ehrenberg 1948: 156-7. This “two foundations theory” ultimately derives from Wade-Gery 1958: 256-7, 261-2, who was attempting to explain why the *Vita Anonyma Thucydidis* 6-7 had Thucydides (the son of Melesias) prosecuted by Xenocritus and ostracized after a return from Sybaris. He argued that an initial Periclean re-foundation of Sybaris was turned into a panhellenic project by Thucydides, who upon returning was attacked in court for it. Thus the idea of two foundations underpins a Thucydidean panhellenic project. Ultimately the theory rests on numismatic evidence. Sybarite coins depicting the head of Athena on the obverse, but bearing the legend -YBAPI in Ionic letters (instead of the local abbreviation MY) on the reverse must, it is thought, refer to a Sybarite-Athenian enterprise prior to any foundation of Thurii (Kraay 1976: 173-4, 184, & fig. 586; cf. Ehrenberg 1948: 152; Rutter 1973: 163; Andrewes 1978: 6, 8n24). However, a similar coin, but with a different reverse design, has also been found (Kraay, fig. 587) which Kraay claims to be a second issue by the New Sybaris. According to the timeline proposed by the two-foundations theory, this means between 446 and 444 New Sybaris struck two different coins! Kraay tries to solve the timeline problem by claiming that the Sybarites were not expelled until 440 (184); this however removes the reason for positing two foundations in the first place (i.e. to explain Thucydides’ involvement in 444)! Moreover, Kagan 1969: 383-4 warns against placing too much emphasis on the Athena type, since it occurs throughout the Greek world (cf. Head: 1911: 85). Kagan’s point is supported by the fact that in 434/3 the Thurians disavowed the Athenians as their οἰκιστῆρες (D.S. 12.35), yet the Athena type continued on their coins into the fourth century (Head 1911: 86; Kraay 1976: 184-5). Alternatively, therefore, the coins could come from Sybaris on Traes, where the Sybarite survivors wound up. The objection to this, voiced by Rutter 1973: 163, is that these survivors would hardly keep the Athena type after their harsh treatment at the hands of the Athenians. But, as Kagan points out, by that reasoning the Thurians should never have used the bull, a Sybarite tradition, on the reverse, a thing they clearly did. In short, the numismatic evidence offers little to no control over the literary evidence. My own suspicion is that the Thurii coins have nothing to do with the 440s but postdate 434/3 when the Thurians broke with Athens. The Thurians would then have been in a position to establish friendly relations with Sybaris-on-the-Traes, whose similar coinage will have expressed that friendship.

³¹⁰ In the decree providing for the foundation of Brea around this same time (*IG I³ 46* [= *ML 49*]), a special amendment was made guaranteeing the right for θῆτες to enroll (cf. Meiggs and Lewis 1988: 132).

³¹¹ As, for instance, the writer of the Plutarchan *Vitae Decem Oratorum* (and Plutarch himself at *Per.* 115), as well as Stephanus Byzantinus (s.v. “Thourioi”) do not (835c).

It is therefore better to follow the Diodoran sequence.³¹² What obscurities it does contain become explainable once it is remembered that constructing a new city takes time. In this light it appears that Lampon and Xenocritus departed in 446/5 with ten ships in order to select a new site. Otherwise, if the selection of the site occurred later, why was Lampon, a seer whose expertise was needed in site-selection, present in the small (and therefore initial)³¹³ expedition? Once the site was selected, construction began. Nor was this any makeshift construction, but the more scientific, painstaking construction of Hippodamus, who it is reasonable to suggest accompanied Lampon, as the architect should have a say in the selection of the site. While construction was going on, Peloponnesian individuals were being recruited and at Sybaris, for the moment a temporary base,³¹⁴ talks were underway on what the constitution should look like. It is at this point that the Sybarites proved intractable, proving an obstacle to a democratic state. Evidence that the disagreement occurred *during* debate, not *after* a government was installed, is provided by Diodorus' language. He says the Sybarites "were allotting" (προσένεμον) to themselves the highest offices. This word is more indicative of arranging a plan of division than appointing a magistrate. He also says the Sybarites "thought their women should" (ᾤοντο δεῖν) sacrifice before the newly-arrived women, not that they were already doing so. Finally, he says that they "were assigning the nearest lots of land to themselves," using the imperfect (κατεκλήρουχουν). If the government is up and running, why have land allotments not been finalized? It is therefore more likely that this imperfect has conative force and refers, as do the

³¹² Cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1303a32 who like Diodorus records the quarrel as happening at Thurii, not Sybaris.

³¹³ As Ehrenberg 1948: 151 believes.

³¹⁴ But Rainey 1969: 272 reports that "all the archaeological evidence points to the conclusion that Thurii was built over the southern section of the city of Sybaris."

others, to the claims and demands the Sybarites were making when plans were being drawn up, not to actual behavior.³¹⁵

At this point the Athenians and the other Greeks take up arms against the Sybarites, give a rather cruel *coup de grâce* to a very unlucky nation and proceed as planned until they “cut the ribbon” in 444/3 BC – which became the date for the chroniclers.³¹⁶

Thus taking the Diodoran account as reliable means attributing to the Athenians a role of leadership in the enterprise. Although they promised to participate (συμπράξιν), it is clear that they quickly commandeered the venture, as their subsequent actions show. First, they issued an invitation to the Peloponnesian states to take part, not officially, but on an individual basis (τῷ βουλομένῳ). There are several *a priori* reasons why the Athenians would throw open the colony to Peloponnesian citizens.³¹⁷ Why the Sybarites would, after receiving the cooperation of Athens, and her empire, is much more difficult to explain. The Athenians are serving their own agenda.

Furthermore, the Athenians provided the seer for the expedition, Lampon. The presence of this man is significant. It indicates that, although the Sybarites had originally requested help in effecting a return (κάθοδος), the project quickly became the organization of an entirely new colony which required the direction of Delphian Apollo through the mediation of a μάντις to be supplied by Athens. Is this what the Sybarite refugees had in mind? On this note, a reference made by Aristophanes is noteworthy. He mentions among those “sophists” nurtured by the Clouds certain Θουριομάντις (*Clouds* 331). This comedic compound, rather obscure on its own, gains in clarity when set against the Diodoran passage. Aristophanes may very well be referring to the clever politicking by which the Sybarites’ project was usurped and transformed into an

³¹⁵ Cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1303a32 who likewise uses the language of demands, not of behavior (πλεονεκτεῖν ἀξιοῦντες).

³¹⁶ E.g. Apollodorus ap. D.L. 9.56. Cf. von Fritz 1957: 908; Ehrenberg 1948: 150n6.

³¹⁷ See Ehrenberg 1948: 153ff.

Athenian initiative by the sophistic machinations and oracle-mongering of men like Lampon, and Lampon himself.³¹⁸

The streets of Thurii were laid out in orderly fashion, with four avenues on a north-south axis intersected by three avenues at right angles (D.S. 12.10), with each street bearing a religious name (Ἡράκλεια, Ἀφροδισιάς, etc.). This grid pattern at Thurii is called the “Hippodamian manner” by Aristotle (*Pol.* 1330b21) and Hesychius expressly says that the Milesian sophist and city planner Hippodamus went to Thurii.³¹⁹ There is all the more reason to believe that Hesychius is right, as Aristophanes in the same passage in which he mentions the “Thuriomanteis” speaks of σφραγιδονυχαργοκομήται (331). These idle, long-haired individuals decked out with onyx signet-rings are evidently some foppish dandies who keep company with men like Lampon. Hippodamus, Aristotle records, was just this type of man (*Pol.* 1267b22).³²⁰ Now, Hippodamus is best known for designing the Peiraeus according to a grid pattern around 450, as well as being the first non-politician to write about the ideal state.³²¹ The inclusion of this high-profile character implies a scale that goes far beyond what the Sybarite refugees could have had in mind when they came asking the Athenians for a *κάθοδος*.

In sum, there are good reasons to believe that Diodorus’ account is on the whole reliable; he merely narrates the several years of the Thurian foundation story under the year it began, 446/5, a thing he commonly does. According to this account it is clear that the Athenians lost no

³¹⁸ For Lampon as a Thuriomantis, see *Suda* s.v. Θουριομάντεις [Θ 418 Adler]. For Lampon’s political career and the room for oracle-mongering in Athenian debates, see Bowden 2003: 269-70, 274, who concludes that there were no professional χρησμολόγοι, only politicians who used the mantic skill they happened to have as a way of supporting their proposals (270-74).

³¹⁹ Hsch. s. v. Ἱπποδάμου νέμησις (= DK 39.3).

³²⁰ Specifically, he wore his hair long, donned expensive jewelry (κόσμος πολυτελής) and wore heavy clothes even in summer. Thus he can quite fittingly be described as σφραγιδονυχαργοκομήτης. Dover 1968:144f takes the ὄνυξ in this Aristophanic compound to denote, not the gem, but long fingernails, and so construes the meaning to be “unkempt creatures, like the Socratics, whose ‘seal’ is the marks they can make on wax with their nails.” But this seems far-fetched.

³²¹ Cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1267b22; Hsch. Mil. s.v. “Hippodamos”; D. 49.22 speaks of a “Hippodamian agora” at Peiraeus.

time in transforming the opportunity presented to them by Sybarite refugees into a grand, but of course self-serving, enterprise. Thurii was an Athenian idea. The implications this has on Protagoras' life are important. Heraclides' notice that Protagoras wrote laws³²² for the Thurians indicates that he must have been involved in the process or on the committee commissioned with drawing up a constitution for the colony.³²³ It also implies, according to the reconstruction of events followed here, that he most likely was involved from the start, perhaps even going out with Lampon, Xenocritus and Hippodamus in the ten ships in 446/5. The collaboration between Protagoras, Hippodamus and Lampon on the Thurian project is perhaps alluded to again by Aristophanes in the same line of the *Clouds* as the one discussed above. Above it was suggested that in line 331 Θουριομάντεις and σφραγιδονυχαραγοκομῆται alluded to Lampon and Hippodamus respectively. In between these two epithets stands ἰατροτέχνη, a theoretical doctor.³²⁴ Protagoras, it appears, developed a reputation, whether true or groundless, in medicine. At any rate, Eupolis in his *Kolakes* has Protagoras bid somebody to drink before the season of the dog-star for the sake of the good health of his lungs (fr. 158 *PCG*).³²⁵ If Aristophanes has the same understanding of Protagoras as Eupolis does, he may well bring together in this one line sophists who had at some time in the life worked together.

If Hippodamus was selected to design the Thurian city plan, it is not surprising, given his previous work for the Athenians. In a similar way, if the inclusion of Protagoras on the committee for drawing up laws for Thurii was approved by vote of the Assembly, he must have

³²² Not *the* laws, see above, fn. 305.

³²³ Muir 1982: 17-24 argues that the law prescribing that the city pay for teachers to teach the Thurian children their letters – the first instance of public education – is to be credited to Protagoras.

³²⁴ See Dover 1968: 144 for the translation.

³²⁵ If medical theory (not medical practice, as Aristophanes' term is ἰατροτέχνη) was another area of interest of Protagoras, it would place in context the biological and anatomical analogies he uses at Pl. *Tht.* 166-167 and *Prt.* 334a3-c6. Cf. above 6.3.1.

been a fairly well-known figure in Athens, and so must have spent some time there.³²⁶ Thus between his arrival in 462 or 461 and his departure for Thurii in 446/5 it is likely that he spent the bulk of this time in Athens. Alternatively, the Assembly could have voted wide powers to a procurator of the Thurian project who in turn would be responsible for commissioning the individual agents. However, given the number of private interests involved in sending out a colony, there is reason to assume that this was one of those occasions when the Athenian people micromanaged the staffing of the project.

If there is reason to think Protagoras departed as early as 446/5, there is just as much reason to suppose he remained there, or in the area, well after the opening ceremony in 444/3. Thurii was a great attraction. It brought the sons of the wealthy Cephalus, Polemarchus and Lysias, the last of whom also learned rhetoric from the famous Teisias there at Thurii.³²⁷ It brought Herodotus who is thought to have died there and, since his manuscript tradition preserves “Thurian” as an alternative to “Halicarnassian,” he must have been among the original settlers, to have citizenship in the city.³²⁸ It brought the philosopher Empedocles who, Apollodorus records in his *Chronica*, came to Thurii right after its foundation (νεωστὶ παντελῶς ἐκτισμένου) (ap. D.L. 8.52). There is a good deal of evidence that suggests Herodotus was familiar with Protagoras’ works,³²⁹ and above (subsection 3.3.4) I suggest that Protagoras was influenced by the work of Empedocles. Thurii is the common denominator between the three. Finally, the minor sophists Euthydemus and Dionysodorus took part in the colonization (Pl. *Euth.* 271c3) and some years later returned to the Aegean area spouting ideas that betrayed a

³²⁶ Cf. Kerferd 1981: 43.

³²⁷ D.H. *Lys.* 1.

³²⁸ For his death and burial at Thurii, see St. Byz. s.v. Θούριοι. For the alternative toponym, see Arist. *Rh.* 3.9.

³²⁹ Cf. Thomas 2000: passim and in particular 126-7, 147-9, 174, 199.

heavy Protagorean influence.³³⁰ This implies that Protagoras was not too busy at Thurii to teach. In sum, in light of this interaction he had with colleagues and students alike one should imagine Protagoras resident at Thurii for some time well after 444/3.

A related question is what role Pericles performed in the Thurian project. In his biography of the statesman Plutarch credits him with a good measure of responsibility for it (11.5), but the reliability of this entire chapter (11), as well as 12 to 14, has been called into question. A. Andrewes, in an effort to show that Thucydides' moral objections to the empire were foreign to the thinking of contemporary Athenians, whether democrats or not, challenges the historicity of the chapters point by point and concludes that a "student in some post-classical school" (4) is responsible for the story of the squaring off of Pericles and Thucydides.³³¹ P. Stadter suggests that that student was Plutarch himself, who was indirectly advising Greek officials of the Roman Empire to treat their urban proletariat with an indulgent hand.³³²

However, the fact that this statement occurs in a defense of Pericles' demagogic behavior which Plutarch finds troubling vindicates the account. Melesias' son Thucydides, Plutarch explains, had organized the hitherto disunited conservatives into something of a group, the Few, pitted against the democrats, now for the first time called the Demos (11.1-4). Because of this maneuver Pericles was obliged to "slacken the reins on the people" and indulge their baser wants with festivals, shows, cleruchies and colonies, amusing them with pleasures (which however, Plutarch adds, were not low-brow [οὐκ ἀμούσοις]), until he secured his position and was finally able to "tune his administration to an aristocratic and king-like pitch" (15.1). This is the Pericles Plutarch wants: the stern, the staid, the very undemocratic leader. If he were composing these chapters himself, as Stadter maintains, why would he create a Pericles he disapproved of, in

³³⁰ See Pl. *Euthd.* 286c2 and *Cra.* 386c2-d6.

³³¹ 1978: 1-5.

³³² 1989: 130-1.

order to give advice he disapproved of? And if he were drawing the information from an unreliable source, as Andrewes wants, he would certainly have challenged it instead of excusing it, just as he in fact does in the case of the story Stesimbrotus records of Pericles' improprieties with his son's wife (13.16). However much credit Plutarch deserves, it is more than this, and the witness he gives to the Periclean motivation behind the Thurian project cannot be dismissed or taken so lightly.

Another piece of evidence Plutarch provides, though small, is valuable. In his treatise on the administration of government he expressly says that Pericles Λάμπωνα...Θουρίων οἰκιστὴν ἐξέπεμψεν (*Praec. Ger. Reip.* 812d). This recurrence of Lampon nicely supplements the Diodoran passage, which nowhere mentions Pericles, and inspires confidence that the evidence Plutarch gives for Periclean responsibility is strong.

Diodorus had mentioned an initial invitation to Peloponnesian individuals. In time this invitation was extended to all Greeks, and those who responded were registered in one of ten tribes organized along ethnic lines. Thus there was an Arcadian tribe, an Achaean, an Elean, a Boeotian, an Amphietyonian, a Dorian, an Ionian, a Euboean, one for the islanders and, finally, an Athenian. Thus it appears that Thurii was envisaged as a panhellenic venture, but one in which the Athenians were to be prominent. For their tribe is the only tribe named after a city, not a region.³³³ This panhellenic element is very similar to the Congress Decree passed three years before (spring 449) which attempted (unsuccessfully) to convene the Greek states at Athens to discuss the rebuilding of the temples burned by the Persians, the sacrifices vowed during the war and the steps necessary in order to preserve peaceful waterways (Plu. *Per.* 17). This decree, especially the last clause, was pregnant with meaning. It implied that peace depended on

³³³ Cf. Ehrenberg 1948: 158; Andrewes 1978: 7, who also makes the interesting suggestion that Thurii was also a way for the Athenians to make provisions for Greeks who were now refugees because of their cooperation with Athens during the first Peloponnesian war.

peaceful waterways which in turn depended on a strong fleet exercising a thalassocracy. Athens, the only state with such naval capabilities, was in effect proposing a common peace under her own tutelage.³³⁴

Plutarch is again witness that Pericles was the one who proposed the Congress Decree (*Per.* 17), whose express purpose was peace and the united action (κοινοπραγία) of the Greeks under Athenian leadership. The Congress Decree and the Thurian project appear to be two sides of the same coin. What the Congress Decree envisaged on a large scale the foundation of Thurii enacted on a smaller, but still impressive, scale. This similarity is another strong suggestion that Plutarch is right when he makes Thurii a project conceived by Pericles and carried out through his associates.³³⁵

7.1.4 Sicily

In the *Hippias Maior* Plato has Hippias tell Socrates how he once went to Sicily and in a brief span of time earned more than a hundred and fifty minas despite the fact that Protagoras was there and commanded a great deal of admiration (282d6-e8). When could Protagoras not simply have gone to Sicily, but have made a business tour of the island, as this passage suggests he did? Davison argued that he went to Sicily before the Thurian project, sometime between 458 and 445.³³⁶ This is much too early. According to this reckoning, Protagoras was between thirty-four and forty-seven years old when Hippias held his own against him in Sicily. But Hippias says that when he was in Sicily he was much younger (πολὺ νεώτερος) and Protagoras older

³³⁴ Cf. McGregor 1987: 70-74.

³³⁵ Cf. Andrewes 1978 reaches the same conclusion about the Thurii project (8), though he rejects the Plutarchan material lock, stock and barrel (1-5). Xenocritus, Lampon's partner in the Thurian project, was also in the Periclean camp. At any rate in the *Vita Anonyma Thucydidis* (6-7) he appears as the prosecutor of Pericles' rival, Thucydides, son of Melesias, after the latter returned from Sybaris at some unknown, but much discussed, date (see Stadter 1989: 131-2).

³³⁶ Davison 1953: 37.

(πρεσβυτέρου). His point is that “though Protagoras was a seasoned sophist, I still took in a huge haul that stupefied my father and fellow citizens,” not “I took in a huge haul, despite Protagoras’ being a decade or so older.” This age difference accords well with the context of the passage, which is a discussion of the state of knowledge in different generations and a comparison of those generations.³³⁷

Another reason why Protagoras probably did not go to Sicily before the Thurian project is that from 466 to 440 the island was in a state of intermittent upheaval. The problems raised by the continued presence of the mercenaries and new citizens brought in by the tyrants created problems of citizenship and property rights which, while more or less settled in Syracuse, Gela, Acragas and Himera by 462, provided the native Sicel population an opportunity to assert itself. Their leader, Ducetius, was from 459 until his death sometime before 447³³⁸ a thorn in the side of the Syracusans and Acragantines. Through the foundation of new cities (Menaenum in 459, Palice in 453, Cale Acte between 450 and 447) or the seizure of existing ones (Morgantina in 459, Motyon in 451), he kept the Siceliotes, already troubled with land issues, from the island’s eastern hinterland (D.S. 11.77, 78, 88, 90-92).

Meanwhile, the young Syracusan democracy was beset with internal problems. No doubt capitalizing on the exacerbation of the land issues caused by the Sicels, men like Tyndarides tried to use the dissatisfaction of the working class as a springboard to tyranny. Tyndarides’ arrest in 454 led to street-fighting and eventually the institution of the procedure of petalism. Though the only event he records, Diodorus is careful to point out that the Tyndarides episode is just one example of many, and so one should take it as an illustration, not an explanation, of the

³³⁷ See in particular 281d3-7.

³³⁸ His death is usually placed at 440 BC (e.g. Hammond 1986: 377, OCD s.v. “Ducetius”), but Diodorus 12.29 only apparently places his death at Ol. 85, 1 (440). The μέν-clause that relates his death by disease refers back to the time of the foundation of Cale Acte (around 447), while the δέ-clause resumes the current narrative.

poor relations prevailing at Syracuse between the πένητες and χαριέστατοι (11.86-87). In addition to this civil strife, the Syracusans had to deal with Etruscans who were pirating their holdings (11.88).

Relations between Syracuse and Acragas deteriorated over the lenient treatment Ducetius received from the former after his surrender in 450. The hostility between these two cities, Diodorus relates, split the Sicilian cities in two, who called for war quite vehemently (12.8). The two cities, each with its own allies, met at the Himera River in 447 and in a hard-fought battle in which 1,000 Acragantines perished the Syracusans and their allies took the victory. The Syracusan democracy now had the upper hand in Sicily, but still had to deal with the Sicels who continued to keep them out of their own backyard until 440, when they were defeated in a last-ditch effort at Trinakia (12.29-30).

These being the conditions that the major Sicilian cities were experiencing in the 450s and 440s, it is very unlikely that a young, inexperienced Hippias would have thought a trip to Sicily worth his while and, even if he did, would have brought back two and half talents. Likewise, Protagoras, whom Hippias found there already teaching, probably did not go there until after Thurii and since, as I argue in the previous section, it appears he stayed at Thurii for some years after its foundation in 444, it would not be unreasonable to suppose he crossed over to Sicily around 440, when the recent pacification of the Sicels would not only have aroused euphoria in the eastern part of the island, but would have created as well the right conditions in which one could dispose of his income on less basic commodities.

If a *terminus post quem* for Protagoras' Sicilian tour can thus be set in the neighborhood of 440 BC, a *terminus ante quem* can perhaps be set by a passage in the *Protagoras*. When asked by Socrates to clarify what exactly he teaches, Protagoras says what it is not. He will not, as

other sophists do, take a student fresh from mechanical subjects (τέχναι) and throw him into more mechanical subjects, like mathematics, astronomy, geometry and music. Here Socrates interjects the observation that Protagoras, when making this statement, gave Hippias a look (318e3-4). Hippias of course was active in these, and other, subjects, but so were the sophists generally, even Protagoras himself.³³⁹ So, the nature of Hippias' curriculum is not enough to explain why Protagoras wishes to discredit Hippias, and why he spares Prodicus, in front of the young Hippocrates. On the other hand, Protagoras' look would be explained if Hippias and he had a history. What Hippias brags about in the *Hippias Maior* implies that his earning the two and half talents in Sicily involved an occasion or a series of occasions in which he, though much younger, outdid the older Protagoras. As a result, there would be some bad blood between them which Plato dramatized as a reality-effect.

This success Hippias had might also explain why later in the dialogue Plato has him put on airs in self-righteously chiding Protagoras and Socrates for bickering and patronizingly calling upon the two men to find a compromise by electing, in good democratic fashion,³⁴⁰ a referee (337c6-338b1). Considering Hippias' actual position in the drama (he has throughout occupied the best, most authoritative seat in the house, the θρόνος [315c1, 317d9]), he probably has himself in mind as the referee.³⁴¹

I submit then that Plato's portrait here of the conceited Hippias is meant to reflect his recent Sicilian successes which hurt Protagoras' profit or pride and caused some antipathy between them. Since the dramatic date of the *Protagoras* is usually placed at around 433,

³³⁹ See Arist. *Metaph.* B2 997b32 (= DK 80 B7) for a contribution of his to a geometrical discussion in a work on mathematics (unless the title, Περὶ τῶν μαθημάτων, is on the sciences in general; but in either case the point stands). Cf. also Plato, who says Protagoras composed refutative treatises on wrestling and other τέχναι (Soph. 232d9-10).

³⁴⁰ Hippias remarks that Athens is the πρυτανεῖον of Greece. So, when he says that they need to elect an ἐπιστάτης, the reference to the democracy is clear, as this word denotes the presiding tribe's chairman who officiated in a daylong term in both the Assembly and Council.

³⁴¹ Cf. Adam & Adam 1893: 148.

Protagoras will have been bested by Hippias before that date. And so his entire Sicilian tour can be placed between the years 440 and 433.

7.1.5 First Return to Athens

As indicated above, between 440 and 433 was the perfect time to visit Sicily, as the island was then enjoying more peace and prosperity under Syracusan leadership than it had in a long time. It was also a time when it was wise to stay away from Athens. If J. Mansfeld is right in dating the decree of Diopeithes to 438/7 and the related attacks on Pericles' associates Pheidias, Aspasia and Anaxagoras to the years 438-6,³⁴² then Protagoras, as a thinker, stood in violation of that decree and, as a friend of Pericles, was vulnerable to similar attacks.

When the heat was off, he returned to Athens. Since the return to Athens that Plato dramatizes in the *Protagoras* is generally set in 433 or 432,³⁴³ it was probably at this time when he returned. In this dialogue Hippocrates is made to say that he was a *παῖς* (fourteen years old or below), when Protagoras *τὸ πρότερον ἐπεδήμησε* (310e5). Davison takes these words to indicate a previous arrival, but there is little reason to do so. *Ἐπιδημεῖν* typically indicates a term of residence, not a simple arrival,³⁴⁴ and the aorist tense makes sense if one simply assumes that Hippocrates envisages a second term of residence for Protagoras, as in fact Protagoras himself does.³⁴⁵

And as a matter of fact it appears that Protagoras resided in Athens for several years. In the summer of 430 the plague broke out in Athens and killed many, eventually including Pericles

³⁴² Mansfeld 1980: 84-89. Cf. Ostwald 1986: 192-198. For the substance of the decree, see Plu. *Per.* 32.

³⁴³ So Adam & Adam 1893: xxxvi; Morrison 1941: 2-3; Davison 1953: 37; Denyer 2008: 66. For a summary of the arguments for this date, see Morrison 1941: 2-3.

³⁴⁴ LSJ s.v.

³⁴⁵ Protagoras too believes Socrates and he will have plenty of time to discuss the nature of virtue further, as he says at the end of the dialogue (361e). Cf. also Kerferd 1981: 42-3.

in the fall of 429.³⁴⁶ His two legitimate sons, Paralus and Xanthippus, died of the plague as well sometime before.³⁴⁷ In a fragment Protagoras describes Pericles' fortitude in bearing the deaths of his sons, which, if it really is an eyewitness account, as Davison thought it was, means Protagoras was in Athens for some time after its outbreak in summer 430.³⁴⁸

This was also the year in which Pericles suffered a political setback. According to the most probable account, having been elected general for the year 430/29, in the course of this term of office he was fined and deposed because of the resentment the plague had aroused against him, and remained deposed until re-elected the following Anthesterion (mid February to mid March) of 429 for the archon year 429/8.³⁴⁹ If Plutarch's sequence of events can be trusted, Pericles' sons died during their father's term of deposition (*Per.* 37), and this deposition, Thucydides says, occurred late in Pericles' generalship of 430/29, since the Athenians re-elected him not long after deposing him (ὅσπερ οὐδ' αὖθις οὐ πολλῶν) (2.65.4). Further, Protagoras' description of Pericles' reaction to his sons' deaths suggests it had a part in reconciling him to the people (πολλὸν ὤνητο...εἰς...τὴν ἐν τοῖς πολλοῖσι δόξαν). It therefore seems that Pericles' sons died shortly before his re-election and that Protagoras witnessed both, which puts him in Athens as late as Anthesterion of 430/429, around eight months after the breakout of the plague.

7.1.6 Second Return to Athens

At some point after this date Protagoras left Athens. This is suggested by the information provided by Athenaeus who states that the *Konnos*, a comedy produced by Ameipsias in 424/3

³⁴⁶ Th. 2.37, 65; Plu. *Per.* 38.

³⁴⁷ Plu. *Per.* 36.

³⁴⁸ Davison 1953: 38. For the fragment, see DK 80 B9.

³⁴⁹ Th. 2.65.4; Plu. *Per.* 35. Cf. Hornblower 1991: vol 1, 341. Gomme believes Pericles quickly paid the fine and was re-instated within a few weeks (Gomme, et al: 1945-81), but Thucydides' use of εἴλοντο suggests a regular election. For the date of elections (the seventh prytany = Anthesterion), see *Ath. Pol.* 44.4.

had a chorus of thinkers (φροντισταί) in which Protagoras was noticeable by his absence (5.218b = DK 80 A11). The weight of this evidence is strengthened by the fact that Aristophanes' *Clouds* which was for the first time produced in the very same year foists on Socrates several Protagorean ideas³⁵⁰ and that during the debate between Just Logos and Unjust Logos the sophist who developed these logoi is nowhere mentioned. It is as though Aristophanes' Protagorean jokes would fall flat unless he pinned them on a present personage.³⁵¹ When Protagoras left Athens is uncertain, but considering the fact the Pericles died in the fall of 429, that the plague continued to be a problem and that Cleon, Pericles' enemy,³⁵² had not only stepped into the limelight, but was distinguishing himself from Pericles by taking an anti-intellectual stance which he voiced as early as 428,³⁵³ 429/28 was a good year for Protagoras to depart.

However, Eupolis' *Kolakes*, produced in 422/1 and caricaturing Protagoras as a flatterer at Callias' house,³⁵⁴ suggest he was back in Athens when this comedy was being composed.³⁵⁵ Two events might have encouraged Protagoras to return by this date. The armistice that the Athenians, discouraged by their defeat at Delium and alarmed at Brasidas' successes in Chalcidice, struck with the Lacedaemonians for the year 423/2 might have made Protagoras confident enough to return in 423/2. Or, if Cleon had indeed been a factor in Protagoras' departure earlier that decade, his death at Amphipolis in summer 422 might have brought him back in 422/1 just in time to be incorporated by Eupolis into his comedy (which by the way took first prize at the City Dionysia³⁵⁶).

³⁵⁰ 636-642, 658-692, 1020-21.

³⁵¹ There were changes to the comedy after the first production, but they did not affect the *dramatis personae* or suggest that the debate between the Logoi was not in the first production. See Dover 1968: lxxx-xcviii.

³⁵² Plutarch, interpreting the contemporary comedian Hermippus' δηχθεὶς αἰθωνὶ Κλέωνι, says Cleon increased his influence by means of the people's anger at Pericles (*Per.* 33.7).

³⁵³ Cf. Th. 3.38.

³⁵⁴ Cf. *PCG* Eupolis *Κόλακες* Test. iii-vi, viii.

³⁵⁵ Ath. 5.218b (= DK 80 A11). So Davison 1953: 34.

³⁵⁶ See Hypothesis I to Ar. *Pax*. (= *PCG* Eupolis *Κόλακες* Test. I).

7.1.7 Death

By the time of the production of Eupolis' *Kolakes* in early 422/1 Protagoras was around 72 years old, and so near the end of his life. There is a tradition that he was accused by Pythodorus, son of Polyzelus on a charge of impiety (ἄσέβεια) for his atheism, tried and condemned; that the Athenians burned his books; and that Protagoras drowned in a shipwreck when going into exile.³⁵⁷ Morrison and Davison accepted the tradition and each tried to determine when the fiasco occurred.³⁵⁸ Kurt von Fritz rejected everything except the death by drowning, evidently because it comes from the respected Atthidographer Philochorus.³⁵⁹ His reasons for rejecting the tradition are compelling. In the *Meno* passage in which Socrates comments that Protagoras lived for more than seventy years Socrates adds that Protagoras enjoyed popularity (εὐδοκίμων) for his entire career right down to the present date (c. 402 BC) (91e). Von Fritz points out that if the Athenians had publicly outlawed Protagoras and his works Plato could hardly have written this. He also points to the fact that Diagoras of Melos, the most famous ἄθεος, underwent a similar trial for impiety and likewise perished during flight;³⁶⁰ and since Diagoras not only voiced his atheist ideas, but actually committed an act of sacrilege attested to by Aristophanes,³⁶¹ it appears

³⁵⁷ Timon of Plu. ap. S.E. 9.55-6 (= DK 80 A12), Cic. *Nat. D.* 1.63; D.L. 9.52-54; Plu. *Nic.* 23.3 (only exile, or flight).

³⁵⁸ Morrison 1941: 3-4; Davison 1953: 36. Guthrie 1971: 263 also believes the trial and condemnation story and dismisses *Meno* 91e by affirming that Plato "would have said the same about Socrates," but does not explain this in no way self-evident claim. Kerferd 1981: 43 also defends the tradition.

³⁵⁹ 1957: 910-11. For his death by drowning, see Philochorus ap. D.L. 9.55. A year earlier Vlastos 1956: viii, n6 had expressed his doubts concerning the trial and condemnation, finding them inconsistent with *Meno* 91e, and suggested that, while they were to be rejected, the story of a prosecution might well be true, since Diogenes mentions Aristotle (9.54) as the source for the name of the prosecutor (Euathlus – which however the supporters of the tradition [see above, n358] reject in favor of Polydorus!). But not only is the name Euathlus suspect, since Aulus Gellius (5.10) mentions him as Protagoras' opponent in the *peritrope* that resembles the one in which Corax and Teisias wrangled (S.E. 95-96), but, as I argue below, it is the habit of Diogenes to make connections. His Aristotelian source might very well have mentioned the Protagoras/Euathlus story as an alternative to the Corax/Teisias story, and Diogenes took it as history. So, even the prosecution story relies on weak evidence. Cf. also Podlecki 1998: 97-98.

³⁶⁰ For Diagoras, see D.S. 8.6; Ath. 13.611a.

³⁶¹ Ar. *Av.* 1073.

that information belonging to him was saddled onto Protagoras who, though technically only making an agnostic statement, was still included in antiquity's canon of ἄθεοι.

Consequently, all that can be said of Protagoras' death is that it occurred at the end of 422/1 or shortly thereafter. The story of his drowning should probably be rejected, too, since Philochorus really does not make this claim. Diogenes records: φησὶ δὲ Φιλόχορος, πλέοντος αὐτοῦ ἐς Σικελίαν, τὴν ναῦν καταποντωθῆναι· καὶ τοῦτο αἰνίττεσθαι Εὐριπίδην ἐν τῷ Ἰξίονι. ἔνιοι κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν τελευτῆσαι αὐτόν, βιώσαντα ἔτη κτλ (9.55). Philochorus, in addition to Attic history, wrote on Euripides' tragedies and so in the passage Diogenes is referring to he is simply explaining a reference in Euripides' *Ixion* to a misfortune Protagoras once suffered, perhaps during his trip to Sicily between 440 and 433.³⁶² It is Diogenes who joins Philochorus' statement with accounts of Protagoras' death. As the asyndetic ἔνιοι and the definite article governing ὁδόν make clear, Diogenes has no idea when this shipwreck took place and is venturing to locate it chronologically by connecting it with the Diagoran-inspired tradition of trial, flight and drowning. All Philochorus mentioned was a shipwreck that Euripides' *Ixion* alluded to.³⁶³ Lastly, if that shipwreck did occur between 440 and 433, then there is left no other suggestion that Protagoras again left Athens. Circumstantially at least, the peace of Nicias would be encouragement enough to stay on.

7.2 PROTAGORAS' RELATIONSHIP WITH PERICLES

The above discussion results in the following timeline:

³⁶² *Suda* s.v. "Philochorus." Philochorus' Euripidean treatise might also be the source of the tradition, likewise recorded in Diogenes (9.54), that Protagoras read his treatise *On the gods* at Euripides' house.

³⁶³ There is no evidence for the date of the *Ixion* independent of this tradition of Protagoras' death. Cf. Morrison 1941: 4 and n2.

Birth at Abdera	492 or 491
First Residence at Athens	462/1 to 446
Thurian Project	446 to 440
Tour of Sicily	440 (or later) to 433
Second Residence at Athens	433 to 429/8
Third Residence at Athens	423/2 or (early) 422/1
Death	late 422/1 or early 421/0

This timeline has several interesting implications. First, Protagoras' first residence at Athens coincided with years during which the Athenian democracy reached its highest development. Pay (in the generous amount of two obols)³⁶⁴ was instituted around 459. In 457/6 the first *zeugites* held the archonship. Wade-Gery's "experiment in committing justice to the unlearned" was continued in 453/2 when demes juries were instituted in addition to the state courts. In 451/0 was passed Pericles' proposal that the state only recognize as citizens those who were born of two Athenian citizens in an effort to safeguard the privileges the "radical" democracy was granting its citizens.³⁶⁵ Protagoras was in Athens during the time when these practical steps were taken to implement a governmental system that fundamentally challenged Greek moral and social assumptions on the individual and his community. Just as the institution of these measures alone was enough to exacerbate and even scandalize traditional thinkers, so were they also a sharp stimulus for more sympathetic thinkers to rationalize the novel changes that were going on around them. And if Protagoras' early life in Abdera was exposed to similar events, then that stimulus for him was even greater.

That the democrats did begin during these years to conceptualize democracy in theoretical terms and attempt a rationalization of it is indicated by their interest in state-craft that emerges at this time. In 452 the Athenians compelled the Erythraeans, who had attempted with

³⁶⁴ For the buying power of this pay, see Markle 1985, who concludes that "a family of four could have been fed on about two-and-a-half obols per day during the fourth century BC" (112 [pagination according to the 2004 reprint]).

³⁶⁵ For the dates of these events, see Rhodes 1992: 67-77.

Persian aid to secede from the league, to resume payment of the tribute and, in order to forestall any future secession, to dismantle their existing government and install a democracy.³⁶⁶ The imposition of a democratic regime, of which Erythrae is the first example, not only indicates a high degree of self-consciousness on the part of the Athenian democrats, but suggests they felt sufficiently confident in their understanding of it to transplant it to foreign soil.

The building program, begun in 449/48 and to run for the next fifteen years,³⁶⁷ shows a similar democratic self-consciousness, if not an exuberant self-celebration which is also evident in the contemporary panhellenic gestures of the Congress Decree and the Thurian project. To the Athenians at this time democracy is not just a form of government which has, as Herodotus makes prosaically clear, its pro's and con's just like any other governmental form. It is a new chapter in human history, the dawning of a new era, a discovery that they even owe their fellow Greeks. The establishment of new democracies, the panhellenic projects and the celebration of the new government atop the cult center of the city denote a confidence, or rather a fervor and zeal, which could only emerge as the result of deep reflection on the meaning of democracy and its momentous implications on the moral and intellectual identity of the individual and the value and self-worth that accrue therefrom to his person. If thinkers in Athens ever rationalized democracy, it was during the years of Protagoras' first stay in Athens.

This timeline also serves as evidence of the friendship between Pericles and Protagoras. The latter's movements are almost keyed to the career of Pericles. He first arrived in Athens when the democrats after the assassination of Ephialtes were looking to Pericles for leadership. He left Athens on a project that Pericles conceived, stayed away when Pericles' non-Athenian,

³⁶⁶ *IG I³ 14* (= *ML 40*). There is to be a council of 120 men who are selected by lot and in an effort to allow as many Erythraeans as possible to serve as councilors, nobody can serve a second term within four years. Athenian *episkopoi* and a garrison commander are in charge of setting up the new government. Cf. McGregor 1987: 61-63.

³⁶⁷ According to the Strasbourg Papyrus (see Wade-Gery & Meritt 1957: 182-4).

intellectual associates were being hounded by his political enemies and not only returned to Athens in 433 despite the looming war, but even dared to stay there despite the terrible plague. This last point in particular suggests Protagoras was not merely a friend and associate, but a member of Pericles' informal cabinet, who returned and stayed in Athens not because he wanted to do so, but because he could be of service.

The evidence for an advisory friendship between Protagoras and Pericles that this timeline provides is consistent with the testimony provided by other sources. Plutarch tells the story how, when one Epitimus of Pharsalus, perhaps in 430 BC,³⁶⁸ was accidentally struck by a pentathlete's vagrant javelin, Pericles spent an entire day considering with Protagoras the question what had been the cause "according to the most correct account," the javelin, the thrower or the judges (*Per.* 36). The concern for correctness, as well as the specific details of the victim and the competitor, vouches for the story's credibility.³⁶⁹ These points alone are enough to suggest a relationship between the two men; but a closer inspection of Plutarch's story shows that that relationship was not just casual. Plutarch relates that Pericles' eldest son, Xanthippus, spread this story abroad for the sake of mocking his father (*ἐπὶ γέλωτι*). What in the story did he expect would embarrass his father? As seen above, Protagoras enjoyed a reputation at Athens that really never waned. So it was not because Pericles was keeping company with sophists.

Athenian law acknowledged that an inanimate object could carry blood-guilt and accordingly a

³⁶⁸ The pentathlon was an event in the Greater Panathenaea (Kyle 2007: 153, cf. OCD s.v. *Panathenaea*). Since this quadrennial festival would have only been held when Protagoras was in Athens either in 450 or 430, the latter date is clearly more consistent with the age of Xanthippus, Pericles' son, who witnessed the daylong discussion.

³⁶⁹ For Protagorean *ὀρθοέπεια*, see Pl. *Phdr.* 267c6. For *ὀρθόν* itself, see Untersteiner 1954: 56f. According to Diogenes, Protagoras wrote a treatise entitled *Περὶ τῶν οὐκ ὀρθῶς παρσσομένων* (9.55 = DK 80 A1). On the story's authenticity, Stadter 1989: 328 is doubtful because Antiphon's *Tetralogy B* makes use of a similar scenario, and suggests the name of the victim is given for the sake of verisimilitude. This seems excessively skeptical. One might just as easily say that Antiphon's tetralogy made use of a conundrum that the historical event of 430 BC had raised (a *terminus post quem* for the tetralogy?), and the added details that the victim was Pharsalian and died during a pentathlon goes far beyond the interests of verisimilitude.

court in the Prytaneum was set up to try such cases.³⁷⁰ So it was not because the subject of their discussion was laughable. That leaves one option: the relationship itself. The academic words of the passage (διατριβαί, διαπορεῖν), as well as the length of time spent (ὅλη ἡμέρα), suggest that the insult Xanthippus had in mind was the fact that Pericles spent so much time with Protagoras as to risk looking like his student. Pericles was too old for that.³⁷¹

In the *Protagoras*, after Protagoras has finished delivering the Great Speech, Socrates declares that if one discussed the things that the Great Speech had addressed with any of the popular orators (δημήγοροι), he would get the same kind of speeches from Pericles or a some other skilled speaker (328d3-329a2). The reference to Pericles is arresting, despite the inclusion of “any of the orators” and “some other skilled speaker,” because it is then recalled that Pericles and his family have been casting a long shadow over the dialogue. Upon arriving at Callias’ house, Socrates find Pericles’ sons, Xanthippus and Paralus, almost cleaving to the pacing Protagoras, accompanied by Callias himself, whom Socrates is careful to mention as the half-brother of Pericles’ sons (ὁμομήτριος).³⁷² Moreover, when Socrates needs an example of sons who were not taught the wisdom of their fathers, he not only points to Pericles’ sons, but also brings up the story of Cleinias, Alcibiades’ little brother, whom Pericles tried to educate, but failed (319e-320a). It has also been argued that Hippocrates, son of Apollodorus, whose admiration of Protagoras was the reason for Socrates’ visit in the first place, was the son of Pericles’ sister, but this connection is unlikely.³⁷³

³⁷⁰ For homicide by inanimate object, see Harrison 1971: 42-3.

³⁷¹ For late-learning, cf. Thphr. *Char.* 27. For Pericles’ late-learning, cf. Pl. *Alc.I.* 118c5-6.

³⁷² Hipponicus, Callias’ father, had married the ex-wife (name unknown) of Pericles. See Nails 2002: s. l. Callias III.

³⁷³ See Nails 2002: s. l. Hippocrates. Cf. Denyer 2008: 68. It is unlikely because, if this Hippocrates were Pericles’ nephew, Plato would have had to explain why he sought access to Protagoras through Socrates instead of going through his cousins.

These frequent reminders that Plato gives of Pericles give one the sneaking suspicion that Plato is having some fun with Protagoras. He not only implies that Pericles is a speaker whose style resembles Protagoras', but in having Socrates comment that one could (and perhaps did) hear Pericles express the very same ideas Protagoras' Great Speech expressed, he declares him in fact to be a politician whose thought and principles are in agreement with Protagoras' philosophy. However, it is made abundantly clear that Pericles failed miserably as an educator of his sons and ward; and in another dialogue Plato stresses how he failed as an educator of the city as a whole (*Grg.* 515d6-516d3). The failure of Pericles gives the lie to Protagoras' philosophy. It claims to impart virtue, but it really doesn't; and those who learn it – as Pericles is the prime example – cannot impart it, because it has a zero value. This point of Plato's is of course tendentious, but that presents little problem for a work addressed to an Academic readership. It is a point that verges on joke³⁷⁴ and presupposes on Plato's part the assumption of a clear Protagorean influence in Pericles' ideas and speech which moreover he could count on his readers to recognize.

³⁷⁴ See above 6.2.3 for another possible inside-joke.

8.0 PROTAGOREAN PREFACES

In chapter seven I investigated the historical evidence for a relationship between Protagoras and Pericles. I found that there were grounds for positing such a relationship and determined that it was of an informal, advisory nature. Alone that investigation is not enough to prove Protagoras exerted any sort of influence on Pericles, but it does have suggestive value and, more importantly, will have supportive value, if any evidence of influence appears from another quarter. In this chapter I argue that the funeral speech composed by Thucydides for Pericles in the pages of his history supplies that evidence. In this speech Pericles is made to express certain ideas, use certain language, and give certain descriptions of Athens that are meant to recall and reflect the teachings of the Abderite sophist.

It is with characteristic subtlety that Thucydides prepares the reader for a Protagorean dimension in his portrait of Pericles. He formally introduces him at 1.139.4: “Pericles, the son of Xanthippus, the leading man of Athens at that time, the most capable in speech and management (λέγειν τε καὶ πράσσειν δυνατώτατος), came forward and gave the following advice.” Neil O’Sullivan has observed that, though the idea of excellence in both speech and management is common enough in Greek literature, “a search through the TLG data base indicates that there is only one other place in Greek literature where this form of words is used to express supreme

ability in both words and deeds.”³⁷⁵ That one other place is *Protagoras* 318e-319a, where Protagoras gives his “professional statement”:

τὸ δὲ μάθημά ἐστιν εὐβουλία περὶ τῶν οἰκείων, ὅπως ἂν ἄριστα τὴν αὐτοῦ οἰκίαν διοικοῖ, καὶ περὶ τῶν τῆς πόλεως, ὅπως τὰ τῆς πόλεως δυνατότατος ἂν εἴη καὶ πράττειν καὶ λέγειν.

O’Sullivan goes on to explore the implications of this coincidence of phraseology on Plato’s portrait of the sophist in the dialogue. As interesting as those are, the implications it bears on Thucydides’ portrait of Pericles are just as significant. The historian introduces Pericles in language that almost duplicates the professional promise of Protagoras. It is not simply influence that is thus insinuated, but the influence of a teacher/student relationship – an insinuation that was also made accusatorily by Pericles’ son Xanthippus (see section 7.2, p. 186-87).

Pericles’ funeral speech, however, is not a verbatim report, but the creation of the historian and as such reflects the historian’s analysis and interpretation of Athenian political culture which he arrived at after careful and painstaking study (cf. 1.20-22). At the same time, though, he put his interpretation in the mouth of a leader who could scarcely be misrepresented by a writer who aimed at writing *sine ira et studio* and was interested in the search for truth (ἡ ζήτησις τῆς ἀληθείας) (1.20.3). What this means, as I will argue in chapter twelve, is that the Protagorean dimension in the funeral speech is both a Thucydidean construct and an historical reality (or at least an historical reality insofar as one acquiesces in the historian’s analysis).

The funeral speech contains a portion that is foreign to the genre. From sections 35 to 41, in what can be called the “constitutional” portion, Pericles describes Athenian political culture, and it is only in sections 42 to 46 that he actually eulogizes the fallen soldiers. The reason of course is that the funeral speech has been incorporated by Thucydides into his history and is now

³⁷⁵ 1995: 21.

made to serve a literary function within that history which it was not, properly speaking, designed to serve, viz. to be a vehicle of historical exposition.³⁷⁶ Consequently, the Protagorean influence is limited to this first half (2.35-41). Moreover, within this first half it is best divided into two parts. For all of Thucydides' terseness and compression, Pericles actually gets off to a slow start, spending two sections on prefatory material. In 2.35 he prefaces the speech as a whole, while in 2.36 he prefaces the constitutional portion.

In this chapter I will deal with these prefatory passages. I will argue that in the first preface Pericles speaks as one who subscribes to Protagorean epistemology. What he says on belief, truth and human opinion, as well as the binary organization he employs, implies that relativism is his assumed intellectual frame of mind. Similarly, I will attempt to show that in the second preface, that to the constitutional half, Pericles chooses as the leitmotif of the speech a principle that served as the core assumption in Protagoras' political science: the autarky of the individual. In the next chapter (chapter 9), as well as in chapter eleven, I will discuss the rest of the constitutional half (2.37-41), and argue that Pericles characterizes Athens and the Athenians as though they embodied that form of government that Protagoras' political thought demonstrates to be *the* ideal paradigm for organizing the fundamentally unorganizable human creatures, thereby making Athens a paradox.

8.1 PERICLEAN EPISTEMOLOGY

Pericles has been selected to deliver the eulogy over the Athenians who fell during the previous year (431 BC). However, he does not take it as a given that everybody present will believe that the subjects of the eulogy are truly praiseworthy. He therefore uses the first preface (2.35.1-3) to

³⁷⁶ But Herodotus (9.27) might have anticipated him in incorporating the *epitaphios* into history.

discuss issues bearing on the reception of the speech as a whole. This discussion in the preface shows Pericles making significant assumptions. Specifically, he gives priority to unanimous belief in what the city has deemed right and good over an objective examination of valorous actions that he could otherwise very easily, and amid much approval, represent as inherently right and good. These epistemological assumptions are of a piece with Protagoras's ethical relativism.

8.1.1 Belief (πίστις)

As the preface begins, Pericles is uncertain whether or not a speech should be delivered at all. He thinks it would be enough for men who were brave in deed to be honored in deed, that is, with an impressive funeral (2.35.1). The reason for this attitude is that, if his words fail to do justice to the fallen soldiers, their merit might not be believed. Belief (πίστις) is important. The Peloponnesian War has just been declared in accordance with the will of the Athenian majority.³⁷⁷ The death of these men symbolizes the Athenian war effort. If their merit is not believed, then there is a portion of the population whose disbelief might cause disharmony in the execution of the expressed will of the majority. They must believe, and believe genuinely. Pericles is so concerned that their merit be believed that he would rather not give occasion for anybody to conceive disbelief through an act of speech.

Significantly, the motivation for belief does not lie in the inherent worth and believability of the merit of the fallen. Indeed, the campaigns in which they fought were very minor (cf. 2.18-33).³⁷⁸ Instead, the audience ought to believe in their praiseworthiness because, simply put, that is what the city believes. This point comes across when Pericles declares that he will

³⁷⁷ For the war as the will of the Athenian majority, see Th. 2.60.4, 2.61.2.

³⁷⁸ See Bosworth 2000: 5.

nevertheless follow the law and speak (2.35.3). The mere mention of the law shows what the city's belief is: The fallen, whether they deserve it or not, ought to be eulogized in grandiloquent praise, and there is ample evidence that this law does indeed represent the city's official opinion. Not only is it typically praised by "the majority of those who have so far spoken here" (οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν ἐνθάδε ἤδη εἰρηκότων) (2.35.1), but it was sanctioned by previous generations as well (τοῖς πάλαι οὕτως ἐδοκιμάσθη ταῦτα καλῶς ἔχειν) (2.35.3). Athenians recently and in the past approved of this law. For this reason Pericles accepts the challenge of vindicating the law, although he personally is not very enthusiastic about it. In other words, he is modeling desired behavior. One ought to believe and acquiesce in what the city by majoritarian rule has decreed.³⁷⁹ Belief in the merit of the fallen is important, not because such is the just deserts of valor, but because the city has decreed such belief for any who perish in its wars. This prioritization of belief over truth with its simultaneous subordination of individual belief to the collective belief recalls Protagoras' application of the human-measure claim to the scale of the polis (see subsections 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.1.3), and thus sets the stage for the rest of the passage.

Pericles goes on to explain the causes of disbelief. Many will likely not believe him because there is disagreement regarding not just the truth, but even the appearance of truth in the matter (2.35.1). On the one hand, the one who is intimately acquainted with the fallen and is well disposed towards them expects lavish praise. On the other, the one who lacks familiarity with the fallen will give a disapproving hearing to any lavish praise. Both sides, however, have this in common: They are subjective. The one who expects lavish praise might claim to be right because of his intimate acquaintance (ξυνειδώς) with the fallen, but that intimate acquaintance is undermined by his benevolent predisposition (εὖνους). True, he is said to "know" certain facts,

³⁷⁹ Pericles expresses the same sentiment, when at Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.42 he defines law as: πάντες γὰρ οὗτοι νόμοι εἰσίν, οὓς τὸ πλῆθος συνελθὼν καὶ δοκιμάσαν ἔγραψε, φράζον ἅ τε δεῖ ποιεῖν καὶ ἅ μὴ.

but his knowledge is compromised by personal desire (βούλεται). Similarly, the one who lacks such acquaintance will likely respond to the eulogy with jealousy (φθόνος) because he will assess the ability of an unknown person by his own ability (2.35.2), and if any praise exceeds his ability, he responds with jealousy and disbelief. True to the Protagorean doctrine that the individual is the measure of all things, both sides of the audience use themselves as the measure of the worth of the fallen, rather than any objective criterion.

Because opinions are formed in so subjective a way, one can establish, certainly no absolute truth over the fallen, and just barely the grasp of truth (ἡ δόκησις τῆς ἀληθείας) (2.35.2). Therefore, Pericles will follow the law, praise the fallen and in doing so “try to satisfy the preference and opinion of each of you to the degree possible” (πειρᾶσθαι ὑμῶν τῆς ἐκάστου βουλήσεώς τε καὶ δόξης τυχεῖν ὥς ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖστον) (2.35.3). I discuss the relativistic implication of the phrase ἡ δόκησις τῆς ἀληθείας in a later chapter (see subsection 11.1.1). What matters here more is Pericles’ reaction. Surprisingly, he has decided not to advocate a factual truth regarding the dead. One wonders how the relatives of the fallen would have reacted to hearing that the valor of their sons, fathers and brothers would not be treated as fact, but as an interpretation of reality which, even if the entire city held it, was still ontologically contestable. But their reaction is not the point. Thucydides is not recording an Athenian moment, but giving a portrait of Pericles who, true to Protagorean doctrine, sets greater store by the truth that consists in men’s opinions than in the one that lies outside men’s minds.³⁸⁰ The fact that he sets greater store by such a truth is stressed again when he declares that he will satisfy the preference of both

³⁸⁰ For the funeral speech as a representation of Periclean thought, cf. Flashar 1969: 33: “Es handelt sich um eine von Thukydides komponierte Rede...mit der er die Politik und die Denkweise des Perikles auf dem Höhepunkt der Macht Athens nach dem ersten Kriegsjahr durch den Mund des Perikles selbst zum Ausdruck bringen wollte.” Loraux 1986: 191-192 comes to a similar conclusion and ends with the insightful observation: “Thucydides’ mark is to be sought, then, in the register of expression accorded to the work as a whole, rather than in the context and strategy of the oration.” Cf. Bosworth 2000: 16, for whom the funeral speech is a “potent distillation of the speech Pericles actually delivered.” It is Thucydides’ creation, but “his art is taken from life.”

sides. He will not call one side wrong (to the disappointment of the relatives no doubt). Instead, he will somehow show how both are right. Protagoras's human-measure claim is assumed from the start in Pericles' privileging of belief, especially collective belief, over fact.

This attitude towards fact, or truth, is consistent with the two instances in the speech in which Pericles actually uses the word ἀλήθεια. At 2.41.2, after he asserts that the individual Athenian is sufficient on his own for any challenge, he declares that the power of the city is ample proof that this is no boast, but “the truth of deeds” (ἔργων ἀλήθεια). But that proof is *a priori* problematic. For Pericles says that Athens is the only city that “causes no indignation in her attacking enemy at the rough treatment he receives and no objection in her subject to the effect that he is ruled by unworthy rulers.” These are bold words after the first summer of the war when the Peloponnesians' invitation to come outside the walls was never answered.³⁸¹ Similarly, Pericles shortly thereafter (2.41.4) declares that because of this “indubitable” power they need no Homer as an encomiast nor anybody else “to give momentary delight with his lays, while the truth of the deeds is damaging to his averred meaning.” Despite the similarity of these words with the values Thucydides himself holds, as he makes clear at 1.22.4,³⁸² they are ironic in the mouth of Pericles whose eulogy of the fallen soldiers far exceeds any tour of duty they could have been involved in.³⁸³ Pericles is using ἀλήθεια loosely.³⁸⁴

Protagoras' human-measure claim is also present in the language Pericles is made to use in 2.35. Terms of measurement describe the two possible reactions to his eulogy. The benevolent

³⁸¹ Strasburger 2009: 210-211 rightly warns against taking this claim naively, “as if an appreciation of such good fortune was to be easily expected from Athens' enemies and subjects.” Cf. Connor's comments (1984: 74 & n54) on the amoral strain in Pericles' thought in this passage, especially regarding the μνημεῖα κακῶν.

³⁸² Cf. Hornblower 1991 ad loc.

³⁸³ See Bosworth 2000: 5; Connor 1984: 63n31.

³⁸⁴ Cf. Ober 2009, who argues that Pericles' invocation of power itself as proof of his claims implies that his claims might be little more than just that – claims (450). Also, such an appeal to visible, “unmistakable” proof in power invites comparison with Thucydides' authorial observation (1.10.1-2) that, if Sparta and Athens were to be judged by later generations on a basis of sole outward appearances, wrong conclusions would be drawn (451). In short, Pericles' “proof” is not, according to Thucydides, sound methodology, but (by implication) rhetoric.

might think the praise is insufficiently demonstrated (ἐνδεεστέπως), while the invidious might think it to be excessive (πλεονάζεσθαι) (2.35.2). These measurement terms suggest Pericles regards the members of the audience themselves as measures (μέτρα) and, as such, arbiters of reality. Objective truth is impossible. What matters is people's opinions. People form these opinions on a basis of subjective knowledge. They use themselves as measures, not only of their fellow citizens, but of what they hear as well (in this case, Pericles' speech). Now the *bon mot* of Pericles becomes intelligible. It will indeed be difficult to speak "in good measure" (μετρίως), as he says at 2.35.2, since the two sides that will critique his speech will measure it with discrepant measuring rods – themselves. Additionally, the fact alone that in so crucial a sentence, when the valor of the fallen is at issue, he uses this adverb, instead of another such as ὀρθῶς or δικαίως, which Maurice Pope shows means harmoniously or consistently,³⁸⁵ suggests an indifference towards a factual account. Pericles wants to speak consistently with their individual opinion, not with the record. For if he did that, he would have very little to say.

8.1.2 Two Logoi

While thus assessing the causes of disbelief, Pericles has at the same time been reducing the possible opinions on the fallen soldiers to two opposite logoi: They deserve grandiloquent praise or they do not. A glance back at what he said on the law calling for a grand eulogy (2.35.1) showed what the consensus view was. It is that they deserve it. Therefore, the opposite is the dissension view. Moreover, Pericles characterizes the dissension view as emanating from a disposition of envy (φθόνος). The dissenters suffer this φθόνος first, because of their unfamiliarity with the fallen; secondly, and more importantly, because, as is natural, they

³⁸⁵ 1988: 288-289. Specifically, he argues that μέτριος in Thucydides typically means "harmonious" instead of "intermediate" and suggests that here in the funeral speech it signifies "striking the right note."

measure the capability of other people according to their own capability (εἴ τι ὑπὲρ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν ἀκούοι) (2.35.2). In other words, Pericles candidly notes what he has been suggesting, that they are measures and they experience corresponding dispositions (cf. subsection 6.1.2). However, he makes it clear that there is nothing inherently incorrect about using oneself as a basis for knowledge. He has already suggested that those who are well-disposed to the fallen, and so hold the consensus view, have done the same. Likewise, the final sentence of the preface (2.35.3) in which he states he will aim for the wish and opinion *of each side* is a strong suggestion that, epistemologically speaking, neither side is wrong (2.35.3). The first preface thus enacts Protagoras's two-logoi fragment without condemning the one logos or the other, though it does privilege one, not for any inherent correctness, but for its city-wide approval.

Thus, 2.35 sets forth Pericles' intellectual assumptions in such a way as to show how they bear the stamp of Protagorean thinking. Conceptually, Pericles describes the situation that faces him in terms that assume Protagorean relativism, the incorrigibility (despite the subjectivity) of human knowledge, the priority of belief over truth and the insistence that the individual's belief must accord with the city's decreed belief, while structurally he frames the situation according to the two-logoi doctrine. Protagoras' epistemology is thus the key note struck at the very beginning of the funeral speech.

8.2 AUTARKY

After striking this note Pericles broaches the subject of Athens' historical tradition, but instead of giving a long, drawn-out account of mythical expeditions, as other funeral speeches do,³⁸⁶ he summarizes the result of that tradition by defining Athens as the state that in all things is self-

³⁸⁶ Cf. Hdt. 9.27; Lys. 2.4-16.

sufficient (αὐτάρκης). That this is an important idea in the speech is suggested by the fact that at 2.40 Pericles defines the individual Athenian citizen as self-sufficient and, more bleakly, by the fact that, when soon after the speech the plague ravages Athens, the Athenian individual proves in no way self-sufficient.³⁸⁷ Self-sufficiency then, or autarky, is the second note struck in the speech and, just like the first, has Protagorean antecedents.

In the *Theaetetus*, after Protagoras finishes explaining how an individual can be wiser than another, and yet still be the measure of all things, Socrates invites Theodorus to examine with him whether or not they were right to take issue with Protagoras' claim (λόγος) on the grounds that it means that the individual is self-sufficient in intelligence (αὐτάρκη εἰς φρόνησιν) (169d3-8). In this section I will argue that it is this Protagorean conception of autarky that lies behind the theme of autarky found in the funeral speech.

8.2.1 Protagorean Autarky: An Existential Necessity

Though the words Socrates uses do not pretend to be Protagoras' own, there is nevertheless good reason to believe that Protagoras both characterized his view of human nature in terms of self-sufficiency and denoted it with the adjective αὐτάρκης as well and that Socrates in using this adjective merely reflects Protagoras' phraseology.

The little work found in the Platonic corpus under the title *Ὅροι (Definitions)*, while not typically considered Plato's, is regarded as Academic nonetheless and is a very instructive source for the way certain key words were defined in a philosophical context.³⁸⁸ For αὐτάρκεια it gives two meanings.³⁸⁹ The first is the material possession of everything one needs. In this sense the

³⁸⁷ Cf. Macleod 1983: 152-153 who sees in the repetition an undermining, in the spirit of tragedy, of Pericles' proud claim. Raaflaub 1990: 57 has a similar interpretation.

³⁸⁸ Cf. Taylor 1937: 544-545.

³⁸⁹ Cf. [Pl.] *Def.* 412b6-7.

word took on various connotations, according to the various assumption of what a mortal needs.³⁹⁰ In a deeper, but clearly related, sense, it signified the absence of the need of any external aid in living one's life and so denotes being master of one's self, not in the negative sense of self-control (σωφροσύνη), but in the positive sense of self-determinism.³⁹¹ As the entry reads, it is the condition whereby those who possess it αὐτοὶ αὐτῶν ἄρχουσιν.

Both of these meanings figure prominently in Protagoras' formulation of human society. Because of their innate intelligence (represented by Prometheus) which necessity activated, the humans individually developed the skills (τέχναι) necessary in order to obtain everything they needed to survive. They were therefore by nature self-sufficient (see subsections 4.1.2, 4.1.3, 4.1.4). In fact, Protagoras considers this ingenuity that gives each of the humans his material autarky so important and impressive that he considers it a link, although figurative, between them and the divine (see subsection 3.3.1). Their material autarky makes them Promethean.

However, their autarky was a mixed blessing. Because they refused to compromise the way of life and *Weltanschauung* they each had developed, every effort at community failed and put them again and again at the mercy of the wild animals (see subsections 4.1.4, 4.2.2). This process of attempt and failure continued until, by a random process that gradually brought like individual together with like individual, they finally succeeded in living together, because the product of that random process was a community of genuine same-mindedness, where no member's opinion was compromised (see subsection 4.3.4; section 4.4). It was an original democracy, founded upon ὁμόνοια (see subsection 4.4.1).

Thus the idea of autarky is integral to Protagoras' theory of human nature and of the role of government. The individual has everything he needs to meet his physical needs and has

³⁹⁰ For instance, the connotation it carried for the Cynics was different than that which it had for Hippias. See Rich 1956: 23-25.

³⁹¹ Cf. Pl. *Rep.* 387d11-e1.

everything he needs within himself to interpret the world around him correctly. He is in need of no education, no instruction. At any rate, there is nobody superior who might give him that instruction.³⁹² On both the basic and the deeper level, he is absolutely αὐτάρκης πρὸς τὸ εὖ ζῆν, much like Plato's brave man at *Rep.* 387d11-12, except that for Protagoras the individual is naturally so; for Plato he must develop that ability by rigorous training. Thus Protagoras' mythos explains historically how one is the measure of all things (see subsections 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 4.2.2). Consequently, the form of government that recognizes the autarky of the individual will be the best, insofar as it will not impose a foreign interpretation upon his conscience, but will acknowledge his freedom (ἐλευθερία) as an autarkic entity, since the decisions that government makes will be identical with his own and will represent in the most correct sense of the word the opinion of the city (see section 5.1). Since democracy is the only form of government capable of satisfying these two conditions, it is therefore the best form of government, because it respects, and thereby encourages and foments, individual autarky, where other forms of government suppress, and in suppressing, enslave it; and it is the truest form of government, because the opinion it enacts is the closest approximation to the population's true opinion and thus comes closest to reflecting a natural order, if any exists (subsection 5.1.2). In this way then the idea of autarky lies at the very heart of Protagoras' relativism, as well as at the core of his defense of democracy, as it raises the democratic principles of equality (ἰσονομία), full participation (ἰσηγορία) and, most especially, freedom (ἐλευθερία) above mere pragmatic concerns to the status of existential necessities.

This being the case, the fact that Protagoras nowhere uses the word αὐτάρκεια nor is made to use it in any source may well be an accident of preservation, especially since it is clear that in the second half of the fifth century both the word and the idea of autarky were important

³⁹² Cf. Pl. *Tht.* 166e.

in philosophical discussions. Pythagoreans sublimated it as an idea of the absence of want into spiritual completeness.³⁹³ Hippias regarded it as the acquisition of skills and abilities that would allow one to satisfy every need or desire he might have, and considered it the τέλος of life.³⁹⁴ It figured in Democritus' thought as an ingredient in one's quest for εὐθυμία.³⁹⁵ But it is important to note that Protagoras' conception of autarky differs from all the foregoing in that, while they elaborated upon the basic idea of autarky as absence of want, Protagoras utilized both the basic idea, as well as the deeper signification of being one's own master (αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ ἄρχειν), the author of one's own fate. Owing to this comprehensive use of the idea, it is just possible, if not probable, that Protagoras was the one whose doctrines were responsible for the expansion of this word.

8.2.2 Periclean Autarky

In the funeral speech autarky is likewise a theme that carries existential implications for the Athenians. Indeed, it can be considered the motif that binds the entire speech together into a conceptual unity. Pericles first takes autarky as the premise of the Athenian state and proceeds to describe it in terms reminiscent of the Protagorean conception. He then makes a transition to the individual Athenian and claims that the autarky which living in the Athenian state develops in the individual is a trait of supreme value in human history.

The quintessential feature of the Athenian state for Pericles is autarky. As he explains at 2.36, Athenian history has moved towards it as towards a climax.³⁹⁶ Their ancestors kept the land free from foreign rule. Their fathers, the previous generation, transformed it into an empire. And

³⁹³ If, that is, later Pythagorean thought reflects earlier thinking. See Scanlon 1994: 160.

³⁹⁴ Unless the relative pronoun refers to Hegesidamus. DK 86 A1. Cf. Rich 1956: 25; Guthrie, 1971: 284.

³⁹⁵ Scanlon 1994: 161.

³⁹⁶ Cf. Loraux 1986: 121-22.

now they have enlarged most areas of that empire³⁹⁷ and developed the city (that is, Athens itself) until it has become “exceedingly self-sufficient (αὐταρκεστάτην) in all respects in terms of both war and peace” (36.3). The greatness of Athens lies in this fact. It is therefore important to ask what this autarky consists in. Gomme rightly clarifies that Pericles does not mean to say that Athens produces within the confines of Attica everything it needs, as though it were an ideal Aristotelian state. When however he goes on to explain that by this phrase Pericles means Athens is in a position to import everything it needs to meet its *material* needs, he does not do the passage full justice.³⁹⁸ First of all, there is an antithesis between empire (τὰ πλείω αὐτῆς [sc. ἀρχῆς]) and the city (τὴν πόλιν), which indicates a clear transition from empire and resources to the civic realm. Then, Pericles claims that they have rendered the city very self-sufficient in all things (τοῖς πᾶσι) for both war and peace (καὶ ἐς πόλεμον καὶ ἐς εἰρήνην). The preposition ἐς is significant. There is a tendency to translate it as though it meant “in time of peace.”³⁹⁹ But Thucydides expresses that idea with ἐν εἰρήνῃ.⁴⁰⁰ Rather, the preposition is final. Not only does the Athenian state have everything it needs to pursue war (a point Pericles has always at the back of his mind),⁴⁰¹ but it has as well everything it needs to pursue peace. It is a polar statement. The autarky of Athens is seen in both “the increase of the revenue and the advance of culture.”⁴⁰²

The following sentence (2.36.4) confirms this reading. Of the features that make up this autarky (ὧν),⁴⁰³ Pericles will forego the military ones (τὰ κατὰ πολέμους ἔργα), and will rather expatiate upon the principles (ἐπιτήδευσις) that led to these features (αὐτά) and the polity

³⁹⁷ So Rusten 1989: 142 and Hornblower 1991: 297 *contra* Gomme 1956: 105 who takes ἐπηυξήσαμεν as referring to a strengthening and consolidating of the empire rather than an increasing of it on the grounds that the latter interpretation would contradict ὅσην ἔχομεν ἀρχήν.

³⁹⁸ 1956: 105-6. So, too, Foster 2010: 202-204.

³⁹⁹ So Jowett 1881; Warner 1972. Blanco's (1998) “for war and peace” is better.

⁴⁰⁰ Cf. 1.142, 2.2, 2.5, 3.82, 5.17.

⁴⁰¹ Cf. Bosworth 2000: 14-15.

⁴⁰² Marchant 1891 ad loc.

⁴⁰³ I follow the scholiastic interpretation (see Hude 1927: 130) of ABFc₂ for the reasons stated in this paragraph.

(πολιτεία) and personality that are responsible for their excellence (τρόπων ἐξ οἷων μεγάλα ἐγένετο). Some have taken “these features” to refer just to Athens’ military and imperial power.⁴⁰⁴ In this case αὐτά would refer to the growth of power in 36.2-3, and so would mean (to preserve the plural number) “accretions of power.” As a result, since μεγάλα certainly refers to the same thing, when Pericles says he will explain τρόπων ἐξ οἷων μεγάλα ἐγένετο, he must be saying that he will explain the character “as a result of which these accretions became great.” However, how a character can render an accretion of power great is not at all clear. Characters can make *great accretions* of power, but can they make *accretions great*? At any rate, it is a complicated notion and Pericles would have had to say more, if that is what he meant.⁴⁰⁵ It is better therefore to take αὐτά and μεγάλα as referring to ὧν, viz. the features in which Athens’ autarky consists, just as the scholia to ABFc₂ recommend.⁴⁰⁶ This being the case, not only is it clear that Pericles understands Athens’ autarky to comprise a military and a cultural part, but also that he regards its cultural autarky as the greater achievement, since that is the aspect of Athens he will now elaborate upon.

Pericles goes on to explain what this cultural autarky looks like in the principles, polity and personality of the Athenian system. The outline alone of this portion of the speech is enough to show how he defines the idea. However one understands 2.37.1, it is at least clear that Pericles recapitulates the idea of the sentence at the beginning of the next with the phrase ἐλευθέρως δὲ τὰ τε πρὸς τὸ κοινὸν πολιτεύομεν.⁴⁰⁷ Pericles can say this because he has just explained how the entire citizenry is involved in the leadership of the state. Thus, Athenian autarky manifests itself

⁴⁰⁴ Rusten 1989: 143; Hornblower 1991: 298.

⁴⁰⁵ Hornblower 1991: 298 avoids the problem by translating αὐτά as power and μεγάλα as empire, but while Thucydides will use a neuter plural where a singular substantive is more usual, that does not mean the two expressions are synonymous and interchangeable for him.

⁴⁰⁶ See above, fn403. See also Parry 1981: 161 for a similar reading of αὐτά.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. Rusten 1989: 147.

in the freedom and self-rule that characterizes its polity. Pericles here makes use of that deeper signification of autarky, so integral to Protagoras' view of mankind. Because of the individual's intellectual and spiritual autarky he must, if he is to be true to nature, dwell in a free state where he has a share in the power. Similarly, Pericles praises the Athenian polity for having these very features and moreover subsumes them under the heading of autarky, indeed as the first and most important aspect of that autarky.

In 2.38 Pericles notes that Athens enjoys plenty of diversions throughout the year. He then observes how Athens reaps the benefits of foreign products by import. Other writers have handled the theme, but for very different purposes. The "Old Oligarch" describes Athens' receipt of goods from all over as a feature of its thalassocracy, and when he refers to those imports as *τρόπους εὐωχιῶν*, it is clear he is charging the demos with extravagant indulgence (2.7). The Old Comedy poet Hermippus makes much the same point, when he lists all the products, from Cyrenaic silphium to Carthaginian carpets, that flow into Athens as a result of the imperial power being placed in the hands of the naval mob.⁴⁰⁸ On the other hand, Isocrates uses the theme to show how Athens has conferred yet another benefit on Greece in establishing a depot in the middle of the Mediterranean (*Paneg.* 42). For Pericles, however, it is a sign of extreme material autarky. It is not simply the case that Athens gets many things. It gets everything (*τὰ πάντα*) from every country (*ἐκ πάσης γῆς*) and harvests the crops of other peoples with the same appropriation as they do their own. Pericles appreciates *both* aspects of autarky, just as Protagoras, unlike his contemporaries, did.

At this point Pericles turns to discuss the military life of Athens (2.39) and the principles that guide its civic life (2.40). Although Pericles does not directly relate these aspects of

⁴⁰⁸ *PCG* Hermippus Φορμοφόροι 63. For Dionysus as the naval mob Kassel and Austin cite Zielinski's paraphrase of the line (1931: 95) "ex quo penes populum Atheniensem est maritimum imperium."

Athenian life to autarky, it is still clear that he regards them as ultimately emanating from it, since at 41.1, where he summarizes all he has said so far, he concludes that the city is the education of Greece, and the person (σῶμα) that the individual Athenian puts at the city's disposal is sufficient in and of itself (αὐταρκες) for a great variety of action with great and graceful versatility. All aspects of Athenian life, not just its self-rule and economic prosperity, but its military practices and civic life, derive from its capacity to be a self-standing, independent entity.

This passage also brings out another point that Pericles is making. The self-sufficient city produces the self-sufficient citizen. The general idea that the city educates the citizen is certainly not peculiar to this speech. In a speech which in several ways mirrors this funeral speech Archidamus is made to make a comparable assumption about the Spartan polis (1.84.3).⁴⁰⁹ The thought goes back at least to Simonides who in a lost elegy asserted, albeit under unknown circumstances, that a city teaches a man (πόλις ἄνδρα διδάσκει).⁴¹⁰ But Pericles takes the idea to a new level. The autarky that Athens imparts to its citizens does not simply teach them excellence (ἀρετή), as important as this point is.⁴¹¹ But more importantly it renders them exemplary specimens of the human race. They are capable to perform almost any task set before them with versatility and grace. Whoever they attack do not get indignant as though lesser men were attacking them; whoever they rule do not find fault with them as though unworthy to be their masters (2.41.3).⁴¹² Their daring has made every sea and every land receive them and

⁴⁰⁹ For the antithesis between these two speeches and the theme of environmental education, see Hussey 1985:123-24; also Bosworth 2000: 1.

⁴¹⁰ Plu. *Mor.* 784b. It occurs in the treatise *An seni respublica gerenda sit*. The argument is that since a city educates a man, one cannot be too old to “learn new tricks.” For the democratic spirit of Simonides’ work, see Donlan 1980: 113-16.

⁴¹¹ That ἀρετή could be taught is another point of agreement between Protagoras and Pericles. See subsection 5.4.1 and cf. Schiappa 2003: 170.

⁴¹² Cf. Strasburger 2009: 210-211 (quoted above, fn. 381).

everywhere they have left “everlasting memorials of wrong repaid and aid rendered” (2.41.4).⁴¹³

For these reasons they are admired by their contemporaries and shall be admired by future generations (2.41.4).

In the *Menexenus* Socrates describes his reaction to such passages as this (235a6-b1):

ὥστ’ ἔγωγε, ὦ Μενέξενε, γενναίως πάνυ διατίθεται ἐπαινούμενος ὑπ’ αὐτῶν, καὶ ἐκάστοτε ἐξέστηκα ἀκροώμενος καὶ κηλούμενος, ἡγούμενος ἐν τῷ παραχρῆμα μείζων καὶ γενναιότερος καὶ καλλίων γεγονέναι.

It is obvious why Plato took such passages as shameless pandering. Is Plato right? After all, he does call the speech he soon has Socrates deliver in imitation of *epitaphioi περιλείμματ’ ἅττα* from this very speech of Pericles (236b6).⁴¹⁴ In a sense he is probably right, even despite Pericles’ two appeals to the truth (see subsection 8.1.1). But as far as the argument is concerned, this is really inconsequential. What matters is that Pericles is able to create an exemplary specimen of humanity out of the Athenian on the basis of the physical and intellectual autarky that the Athenian polis, itself autarkic, imparts to him. The Athenian epitomizes humanity. He achieves mankind’s manifest destiny by achieving autarky, a personal autarky, yet indissolubly linked with the group. Thus for both Pericles and Protagoras autarky is the key to the individual’s full realization of his humanity. Protagoras takes it as a premise of human nature and claims that human civilization came about only because no infringement was made on human autarky. Pericles implies that human history has reached a point it has never reached before. True, he uses a theme common to Greek political thought; but he develops it to enormous proportions. And it is the Protagorean doctrine on autarky that enables him to do so. The Protagorean recipe for civilization is thus re-enacted and re-created in Periclean Athens. For both

⁴¹³ For this rendering of *μνημεῖα κακῶν τε καὶ ἀγαθῶν ἀίδια*, see Rusten 1989: 161.

⁴¹⁴ See Coventry 1989: 3.

the achievement of autarky is the prelude to the maximization of humankind's individual and collective potential.

8.3 HERODOTEAN POLEMIC

This coincidence of thought between Pericles' and Protagoras' conceptions of autarky finds confirmation in the writings of their contemporary. In the famous meeting Herodotus depicts between Solon and Croesus, the Athenian lawgiver attempts to teach the Lydian king the lesson of human vulnerability and the vital difference between a sufficiently fortunate life (εὐτυχίη) and wealth (πλοῦτος). One step in his argumentation is the status of human autarky, and what Solon has to say about it stands in sharp contrast to the way Pericles conceptualizes it in the funeral speech. Croesus, upon losing the distinction of being the most felicitous mortal to the Athenian Tellus and the Argive brothers Cleobis and Biton, asks Solon to explain how this can be. The explanation Solon gives is complex. It is complex because, I argue, it contains three lessons for the Lydian king each of which looks allusively, and critically, to Protagorean tenets. Moreover, in the second lesson it becomes clear that the view on autarky Herodotus is rejecting is not only directed against Protagoras, as the other lessons, but against Pericles, too. The way Herodotus thus lumps Protagoras and Pericles together in these lessons serves as further evidence of the close relationship between Protagoras and what Pericles says in the funeral speech on autarky.

8.3.1 Lesson 1: Knowing the gods

Solon begins the first lesson by remarking that he has been asked about things pertaining to mortals when he knows that “god-ness” (τὸ θεῖον) is jealous and disruptive through and through:

ὦ Κροῖσε, ἐπιστάμενόν με τὸ θεῖον πᾶν ἐὼν φθονερόν τε καὶ ταραχῶδες ἐπειρωτῆς ἀνθρωπείων
 πρηγμάτων πέρι (1.32.1). Though the sentiment is quite traditional,⁴¹⁵ Solon’s words have
 important points of emphasis. First of all, the use of τὸ θεῖον in place of the concrete θεός raises
 the discussion to a higher level of abstract philosophizing about the gods than is customary in
 traditional treatments,⁴¹⁶ and the anastrophe of περί similarly draws attention away from mortal
 concerns to the sphere of the divine. The gods are the protagonists in the created world, not man,
 who far from being a measure must instead accommodate himself to them. Secondly, the
 participle ἐπιστάμενον emphatically occupies initial position, not just of the sentence, but of the
 entire sermon. In short, Herodotus bases Solon’s wisdom and his qualification as a σοφιστής, as
 he is called at 1.29.1, on his intimate knowledge of the way the gods are. He is a σοφιστής
 because he knows the divine. This emphasis on knowledge of the divine as the qualification of
 true σοφία and of a sophist invites comparison with a fake “wise-man,” a fake sophist,⁴¹⁷ who
 denies the possibility of knowledge of things divine, such as Protagoras, the first to own the title
 of sophist proudly,⁴¹⁸ who took a position of agnosticism when he declared:

Περὶ μὲν θεῶν οὐκ ἔχω εἰδέναι, οὐθ’ ὥς εἰσὶν οὐθ’ ὥς οὐκ εἰσὶν οὐθ’ ὅποιοί τινες ιδέαν·
 πολλὰ γὰρ τὰ κωλύοντα εἰδέναι ἢ τ’ ἀδηλότης καὶ βραχύς ὢν ὁ βίος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.⁴¹⁹

The comparison is rewarded upon further inspection. According to the quotation above,
 Protagoras denies the possibility of knowing anything about the gods on the grounds that the
 matter was in its very essence riddled with obscurity (ἀδηλότης) and because human life was too
 short. Solon, on the other hand, bases his entire thesis that the gods are jealous (or stated from
 the mortal view, mankind is a disaster waiting to happen), on the argument that human life is

⁴¹⁵ Cf. Asheri, Lloyd & Corcella 2007: 97-98, 102; Lloyd-Jones 1983: 68-70.

⁴¹⁶ The effect is the same in the other two occurrences (over against 146 occurrences of θεός [Asheri, Lloyd & Corcella: 2007: 102]) of the adjective as a neuter substantive in Herodotus, viz. 3.40 and 3.108.

⁴¹⁷ For the sophists as ἀλαζόνες, cf. Ar. *Nub.* 102. Cf. also Xenophon’s eagerness to acquit Socrates of the charge of ἀλαζονεία at *Mem.* 1.7.1-5.

⁴¹⁸ Pl. *Prt.* 317b3-5.

⁴¹⁹ DK 80 B4 (= Eus. *PE* 14.3.7, who states that the claim formed the opening of Protagoras’ treatise *On the gods*).

more than long enough to teach one this divine jealousy. To demonstrate the “long life” (ἐν τῷ μακρῷ χρόνῳ)⁴²⁰ of the human individual, Solon goes into a correspondingly long calculation of a typical life cycle which far from being brief, as Protagoras opined, actually provides many opportunities to experience and learn this vital lesson (πολλὰ μὲν ἔστι ἰδεῖν...πολλὰ δὲ καὶ παθεῖν). For Herodotus, παθήματα are μαθήματα. That is why he uses the word ἐπίστασθαι for Solon’s knowledge. The calamities one experiences during this long life provide clear knowledge about the gods. The first lesson Croesus must learn is not to buy into Protagoras’ agnosticism.

8.3.2 Lesson 2: Autarky

The next lesson concerns income. If a person makes it to the end of his life without ever having experienced terrible calamity, then he can be called blessed. Otherwise, any judgment is premature and until one does one is either rich (πλούσιος) or moderately well off (μετρίως ἔχοντες) (1.32.5). If a choice has to be made, Solon says it is better to be moderately well off than rich. For, while the rich man has the means to satisfy his desires and sustain any calamity, the moderately well off man does not invite either of them in the first place, but enjoys many good things nonetheless (1.32.6). Thus for Solon, having less is more. This being the case, the moderately well off man has a better life and the chance for a good end (1.32.7). Here Solon adds a *caveat*: Having it all (wealth, gratification of desires and the good things of the moderately well off man) is impossible for a human, who, since his person (σῶμα) is not self-sufficient (αὐταρκες), will always be in need of something (1.32.8). But still, he says, having a great many of them and dying without ever having tasted calamity is true felicity. Therefore one must judge every life by its end (τελευτή) (1.32.9).

⁴²⁰ See Hdt. 5.9.3 for this same phrase, but meaning “since time out of mind.”

Thomas Scanlon has argued that Herodotus' concept of autarky is essentially the same as that expressed by Pericles in the funeral speech, since for both autarky is a necessary ingredient in the happy life.⁴²¹ While it is true that the Herodotean passage verbally echoes the Periclean σῶμα αὐταρκες, the relationship between the two texts is rather polemical than, as Scanlon argues, complementary,⁴²² and Nicole Loraux comes much closer to the truth when she says that the funeral speech "lays claim to exemplariness and proposes a perfect model of humanity, thus renouncing Solonian wisdom, which, born of a time of crisis, considered that 'no man can unite everything within himself.'"⁴²³

This relationship becomes clear when one considers the overall lesson which is that Croesus should beware of the envy of the gods, cultivate a moderate lifestyle, and *not* attempt to achieve autarky. For, not only is that impossible, but, it is implied, it will also excite the gods' jealousy. For Herodotus autarky is not the ideal, but rather compromise and balance between human capability and divine envy is the ideal. The conclusion of his lesson is: ὃς δ' ἂν αὐτῶν πλεῖστα ἔχων διατελέῃ καὶ ἔπειτα τελευτήσῃ εὐχαρίστως τὸν βίον, οὗτος παρ' ἑμοὶ τὸ οὐνομα τοῦτο, ὃ βασιλεῦ, δίκαιός ἐστι φέρεσθαι. Yes, he considers the one who has without interruption a great number of things to be blessed, but the second colon of the clause (καὶ ἔπειτα τελευτήσῃ εὐχαρίστως τὸν βίον) puts a severe limitation on that "great number." His good things cannot be so many as to tip off the gods. Humans must only be as capable as the egos of the gods allow. In

⁴²¹ 1994: 147.

⁴²² After rightly noting the echo between Herodotus' ἀνθρώπου σῶμα ἐν οὐδὲν αὐταρκες at 1.32.8 and Pericles' τὸ σῶμα αὐταρκες at 2.41.1, Scanlon 1994: 147 proceeds to argue that Pericles' words ἐπὶ πλεῖστα ἂν εἶδη recall Herodotus' τὰ πλεῖστα ἔχῃ, and again Pericles' μετὰ χαρίτων recall Herodotus' εὐχαρίστως. Macleod 1983: 151 makes the same connections, but to suggest disagreement between the two. But what use are verbal echoes, if there is no conceptual similarity? With ἐπὶ πλεῖστα ἂν εἶδη Pericles means the Athenian is sufficient in himself "for a great variety of actions"; Herodotus' τὰ πλεῖστα ἔχῃ refers to a country having the greatest number of natural resources. Again, Pericles says the Athenian performs his actions with grace (μετὰ χαρίτων). So Scanlon argues that when Herodotus remarks that one is blessed, if he dies εὐχαρίστως, he means "if he dies in good grace" (153). But that is entirely dissonant with the passage. LSJ's "happily" (sc. as one treated well) is clearly better.

⁴²³ 1986: 153-54. So too Macleod 1983: 152.

sharp contrast, Pericles' funeral speech idealizes an unlimited self-sufficiency in both city and the individual (see subsection 8.2.2). Pericles intends his praise of Athens' autarky to encourage the citizens to add to it, become lovers of it, contribute to it with their lives (2.43.1). The Periclean speech is a call to action to increase the already high level of autarky of Athens. The Herodotean lesson to Croesus is a warning against believing that such autarky in anything mortal, whether city or individual, is ever possible or, if possible, even wise. Pericles, just as much as Croesus, is reprimanded by Solon for his pursuit of autarky à la Protagoras.

8.3.3 Lesson 3: Present *versus* Future Certainty

Having made these crucial points, Solon turns to extrapolate a general rule, a truth to live by: σκοπέειν δὲ χρὴ παντὸς χρήματος τὴν τελευτὴν κῆ ἀποβήσεται (1.32.9) – an idea and phrase Herodotus wants to emphasize, since in the very next sentence he redundantly describes Solon as one ὃς τὰ παρεόντα ἀγαθὰ μετεῖς τὴν τελευτὴν παντὸς χρήματος ὁρᾷν ἐκέλευε (1.33.1). The reiteration encourages the suspicion one is likely to conceive when reading this passage that the Herodotean παντὸς χρήματος is meant to recall the Protagorean πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἄνθρωπος, especially if, as I argue earlier in this section, Solon's words on the knowledge of things divine are meant to engage with Protagoras' agnosticism. This being the case, the general rule Solon is introducing appears to refer to, and reject, relativism.

A passage in *Theaetetus* suggests just how Solon rejects it. A major implication of Protagoras' relativism is that it privileges the present over the past and future. Accordingly, in the "defense" he gives through Socrates in the *Theaetetus*, Protagoras denies the existence of all but what one experiences (οὔτε γὰρ τὰ μὴ ὄντα δυνατόν δοξάσαι, οὔτε ἄλλα παρ' ἃ ἂν τις πάσχη) (167a7-8). This rejection of future knowledge is the very thing that allows Socrates to level his

weightiest argument against the Abderite's relativism. If the individual, he argues, has within himself the criterion for all things, then this criterion presumably includes future qualities and outcomes as well. So, if a patient believes he will catch fever, while his physician believes he will not, according to whose opinion, Socrates asks rhetorically, are we to say the outcome will be (ἀποβήσεσθαι)? Of course, time will tell that the physician was correct and that therefore the patient was mistaken (178b2-c7).

Whether or not Socrates has Protagoras where he wants him,⁴²⁴ it is important to note how he attacks Protagoras' relativism. He pits future outcomes against the individual's present opinion. Similarly, Solon's final lesson to Croesus advises him to judge everything (παντὸς χρήματος) by its final outcome (τὴν τελευτὴν κἢ ἀποβήσεται) and realize that his present prosperity (τὰ παρόντα ἀγαθὰ) gives no real indication of his identity as felicitous or not. Croesus must stop judging things by the palpable objects that enter his immediate experience.

Herodotus is not of course refuting Protagoras. But he is, I suggest, referring to Protagoras' teaching in order to invest his portrait of Croesus with a current, topical nuance. Through anti-Protagorean advice to Croesus he insinuates that, when one commits himself to the human-measure claim, he limits his judgment to only present data, casts a blind eye to the future and thus exposes himself to the age-old warning, found frequently in previous literature, not to claim anything to be the case until it has reached its end.⁴²⁵ Traditional wisdom taught a humble abeyance and suspension of certainty; Protagorean relativism encouraged a devil-may-care self-assuredness. Herodotus, through the words he gives Solon on knowledge and the gods, on

⁴²⁴ At *Tht.* 166b4-c6 "Protagoras" gives the impression that he might have responded that one's future self is entirely different from one's present self, a response Burnyeat entertains and examines (1990: 40-42). However, it is clearly based on the Heraclitean doctrine of flux.

⁴²⁵ Aesch. *Ag.* 928-29; Simon. 521 (*PMG*); S. *Tr.* 1-3, *OT* 1528-30.

autarky and on present *versus* future certainty, pits this traditional wisdom, in the person of Solon, against Protagorean wisdom, in the person of Croesus.⁴²⁶

The Protagorean nuance Herodotus uses in his Solon/Croesus narrative suggests a link between Pericles and Protagoras on the score of autarky. I have been arguing that there is a mild polemic between Herodotus and Protagoras in this passage.⁴²⁷ Therefore, seeing that Herodotus characterizes autarky in a way that contrasts so sharply with the way Pericles characterizes it, and does so in the context of a passage that criticizes the Protagorean worldview, it appears that Herodotus, in taking the one to task, takes them both to task. He can thus be regarded as providing literary evidence, on top of the conceptual evidence given in the previous section, that Periclean and Protagorean autarky go hand in hand.

8.4 CONCLUSION

These are the ways in which I suggest the first two sections of the funeral speech reflect Protagorean teaching. From what Pericles says in the first preface it is clear that he views the situation he is presented with through the lens of a Protagorean-style epistemology that privileges belief over factuality, places greater value on subjective impression than on objective inference, and organizes its data in opposing, yet equally validated, perspectives. Similarly, what Pericles says in the preface to the constitutional portion of the speech on autarky and its role in the Athenian democratic ideology is much closer in its degree of importance to the role autarky plays in Protagoras' thought than in that of other contemporary thinkers. Finally, a comparison of

⁴²⁶ It is interesting to note that Solon, as representative of the *πάτριος πολιτεία*, was similarly pitted against the Periclean democracy by *Ath. Pol.* (29.3, cf. D.S. 14.3).

⁴²⁷ For other passages where Herodotus appears to register his disagreement with Protagoras, see subsections 3.3.2, 5.1.2, 9.4.2. For the presence of both Herodotus and Protagoras at Thurii, see subsection 7.1.3 with fn. 328.

Periclean autarky with Herodotus' construal of it not only suggests a link between Pericles and Protagoras, but also, in a broader perspective, a basic disagreement on Herodotus' part with the Abderite sophist. In the next chapter I will discuss how Pericles goes on in the constitutional portion of the speech to characterize the facets of Athenian government in ways that suggest that the hallmarks of the Athenian democracy were rationalized, and to an extent justified, by the relativistic worldview of Protagoras.

9.0 THE PROTAGOREAN SIDE OF ATHENIAN POLITICS

Now that Pericles has set isolated autarky as Athens' most characteristic feature, he undertakes to show what that autarky looks like in Athenian political culture. While he addresses many elements and dimensions of the Athenian state, it is particularly in his discussion of leadership, society, and justice in Athens in 2.37 and decision-making and military activity in 2.40 that his Protagorean assumptions come most visibly to the fore. Specifically, he characterizes office-holding in Athens as determined by the sole criterion of political ability, or virtue (*ἀρετή*). True, there are other factors, in particular one's income, but these are miniscule and at any rate only help ensure that political ability is always the final and weightiest qualification. Athens remains an aristocracy of virtue. The Protagorean influence in this passage resides in the assumptions Pericles makes about the political ability of the individual, about the role of natural endowment in government, and about the function wealth should perform in it. Similarly, what Pericles says here about Athenian society and justice are indebted to Protagoras' construal of the ideal human government as a society of consensus.

After describing Athenian leisure and military training, Pericles returns in 2.40.1-3 to the political arena and discusses the mode of decision-making in Athens. Here again the influence of the sophist betrays itself in Pericles' insistence on city-wide participation in the decision-making process, in his praise of the process as a way of finding agreement without sacrificing plurality, and in his attribution of Athenian military success to precisely this deliberative procedure. All in

all, these two passages present a picture of Athenian political culture that is determined by a Protagorean *Weltanschauung*.

It is around this point that Pericles concludes this portion of the funeral speech and turns to its proper subject, the praise of the fallen soldiers. But the influence of Protagoras does not stop there. As I will argue in chapter eleven, the rhetorical agenda of the speech as a whole reflects the sophist's rhetorical teachings (which I will set out in chapter ten), just as in this chapter I argue key passages reflect his political science.

9.1 POWER TO THE PEOPLE

Pericles addresses Athenian leadership from two perspectives. First, he discusses broadly where authority constitutionally lies. He then becomes more specific and describes the nature of office-holding in the Athenian state. In this section I will discuss the first issue and attempt to show that Pericles claims that power has been invested in the entire citizen body of Athens and that in making this claim he uses explanations that Protagoras likely used.

9.1.1 Wholeness over Partiality

Pericles begins (2.37.1) by observing that the Athenians have a unique constitution, one that serves as a model to others. It has been named, he says, democracy διὰ τὸ μὴ ἐς ὀλίγους ἀλλ' ἐς πλείονας οἰκεῖν. What exactly does this phrase ἐς πλείονας οἰκεῖν mean? Does it mean that power lies *in the hands* of the majority, or that the state is run *in the interests* of the majority? Is the government *by* the people, or *for* the people?⁴²⁸ On the whole, the arguments that it means *in*

⁴²⁸ See Robinson 1997: 57n71 for a list of commentators, translators, scholars who favor one or the other interpretation. Those who favor an interpretation of "in the hands of the majority" include: Poppo, Classen, Steup,

the hands of the majority are the more compelling. As Eric Robinson points out, the preposition ἐς meaning “in the hands of” is more consonant with general Thucydidean usage (cf. 8.38.3, 8.89.2 and 8.53.3 [especially]); and moreover Plato’s *Menexenus* 238d3-4, being modeled closely on this passage,⁴²⁹ “defines the Athenian democracy with the phrase ἐγκρατὲς τῆς πόλεως τὰ πολλὰ τὸ πλῆθος.”⁴³⁰ Besides these reasons, an *a priori* argument also carries some weight. Pericles’ point in using the phrase is to explain the formal name “democracy.” It would hardly make much sense to say “it is called People-Rule, because it takes the people’s interests into account, while actually being ruled by others.”⁴³¹

The phrase is often translated just as I have been translating it: “management in the hands of the majority.” But “majority” fails to capture a vital idea. It is significant that the comparative of πολὺς is used here, since it stands against the positive degree (ὀλίγους) and is the sole instance where Thucydides uses the uncontracted form of the comparative, everywhere else preferring the contracted πλείους. Harris suggests it is used “to allude to the procedure followed in both the deliberative bodies, the Council and the Assembly, which passed only those measures that received a plurality of the votes cast.”⁴³² It is hard, though, to expect such precision from so broadly thematic a sentence. A more likely explanation can be found in the ideological sloganeering inherent in many fifth-century political terms. Discussing this sloganeering, R. Brock argues first that oligarchs got the jump on democrats in developing a “moral terminology

Gomme, Kakridis, de Romilly, Vretska, Raaflaub, Harris. Those who favor the other are: Sheppard/Evans, Sealey, Meyer, Ostwald, Rusten, Hobbes, Crawley, the Oxyrhynchus Commentator.

⁴²⁹ Cf. Vlastos 1973: 191; Coventry 1989: 3.

⁴³⁰ 1997: 57-58. So too Raaflaub 1990: 60.

⁴³¹ Cf. Harris 1992: 164 for this same argument. He adds two more which I find quite compelling. First, the entire point of the passage is a contrast between democracy and oligarchy. A meaning of “in the interests of” would severely cripple that contrast. Secondly, it would just be otiose. Any government could claim, as even some dictatorships have done, to be administered in the interests of the majority.

⁴³² 1992: 162.

to denote class and/or political alignment.”⁴³³ They, *qua* aristocrats, were ἀγαθοί, while the democrats were κακοί and πονηροί.⁴³⁴ He notes by the way that this terminology likely intensified after the Ephialtean reforms of 462 BC, going some way “to mitigating the impotence [of the oligarchs] in practical politics.”⁴³⁵ He next argues that the democrats responded in various ways. One way they responded was by redefining those very moral terms, so as, for example, to give a meaning of civic uselessness to ἀπραγμοσύνη. Another way, and one more to the point, was by using numerical terms to denote the two groups. Oligarchs were ὀλίγοι, ἐλάττους, while democrats were ὁ δῆμος, τὸ πλῆθος, οἱ πλείονες, τὸ πολύ, οἱ πάντες. “Such slogans,” he states, “served to identify democracy with the interest of the *whole people and city* [my italics] while branding oligarchy as factional.”⁴³⁶ In support of this interpretation, he cites Th. 6.39.1, where Athenagoras defines democracy: ἐγὼ δέ φημι πρῶτα μὲν δῆμον ζύμπαν ὠνομάσθαι, ὀλιγαρχίαν δὲ μέρος. In this vein he notes that among democrats there was an effort to equate the city with the Demos, an effort he sees already in Solon and Simonides, and believes complete by the time of Aeschylus’ *Supplikes*.⁴³⁷ The important result of Brock’s study then is that the numerical terminology encountered so often in Athenian politics was a democratic invention used in order to express the democratic slogan of wholeness over partiality. Brock’s conclusion receives emphatic support from Herodotus’ Otanes who sums up his encomium of democracy with the epigrammatic clincher ἐν γὰρ τῷ πολλῷ ἔνι τὰ πάντα (3.80.6).⁴³⁸ What democrats meant therefore when they referred to “the more numerous” was the entire polis. Ὀλίγοι was the original disparaging term. Here belongs the Athenians’ assumption that decisions taken on the

⁴³³ 1991: 163.

⁴³⁴ 163. Cf. Reverdin 1945: 208-212; Donlan 1980: 127 (who however attributes the origin of οἱ πολλοί to the aristocrats, though LSJ does not cite an attestation of the word bearing this meaning before Thucydides) and subsection 6.2.2 above.

⁴³⁵ 163n17.

⁴³⁶ 164.

⁴³⁷ For dating this play to the spring of 463 BC, see Podlecki 1966: 42-43.

⁴³⁸ Cf. Asheri, Lloyd and Corcella 2007: 475 and Raaflaub 1990: 41-42.

Pnyx, though representing at most 6000 heads, stood for the entire citizenry (cf. subsection 6.2.5).

In light of Brock's article, Pericles' use of *πλείονας* can now be seen more clearly. He is drawing a contrast between oligarchy and democracy and characterizing the former as factional and the latter as representative of the whole, just as Otanes and Athenagoras do.⁴³⁹ Not only does this reinforce the view that Pericles declares the state to be in the hands of the majority, but also suggests the influence of Protagoras. Pericles' democratic slogan is similar to Protagoras' doctrine of consensus. For Protagoras the opinion of the city was synonymous with the just and honorable (cf. subsection 5.1.2). It was therefore necessary for the *entire* city to be in agreement on decisions taken; otherwise, if anybody was left out or sat out of his own volition, that decision could not be called in the most correct sense of the word the city's opinion (see subsection 5.1.3). What is more, his entire rhetorical program was designed to be an instrument for securing unanimity and same-mindedness in the voting public (see section 10.5). Pericles' insistence on wholeness over partiality thus resonates with the logical requirements of Protagoras' relativist state.

After discussing the democratic terminology that arose in response to oligarchic moral bias, Brock concludes that this terminology implies the existence of a systematic theory of democracy which however was not set down to writing: "[t]he Athenians were perfectly capable of justifying democracy in theoretical terms."⁴⁴⁰ There is good reason for this conclusion. The very fact that οἱ πολλοί counter-intuitively first appears as a term insinuating wholeness, instead

⁴³⁹ Similarly, a Thucydidean *variatio* at 4.86.4 is helpful. There Brasidas says that the freedom he brings would not be worth much, if he subjected the majority to the few (τὸ πλεον τοῖς ὀλίγοις) or vice versa τὸ ἔλασσον τοῖς πᾶσι. "All" and "the majority" are synonymous. Related to this concept is what Pericles says at Th. 2.60.1-3 on the relation of the individual to the state.

⁴⁴⁰ 1991: 169. A particularly strong argument of Brock's is that in the Persian debate at Hdt. 3.80 Otanes rejects monarchy and oligarchy, not because of the quality of the ruler(s), but because of the nature of power, while Megabyzus and Darius reject democracy in terms of class prejudice. This suggests for Brock that democrats took the lead in thinking abstractly about government (165-6).

of commonality,⁴⁴¹ does indeed suggest not simply systematic, theoretical thinking on the democrats' part, but specifically thinking along the lines of Protagoras' doctrine of consensus.

9.1.2 *ἰσωνομία* rejected

Both Protagoras and Pericles acknowledge the fact that democracy and isonomy are in a sense synonymous. Protagoras evokes isonomy by specific vocabulary that is etymologically related to νόμος.⁴⁴² At the time when humanity's first experiment in community is going awry and Zeus bids Hermes to take δίκη and αἰδώς to men, Hermes asks how he is to give them (322c6-9):

“As the skills have been distributed (γενέμηνται), am I to distribute (νείμω) these too? This is the way they've been distributed (γενέμηνται): one man proficient in medicine meets the needs of many private men, and [so are] the rest of the craftsmen; accordingly am I to enact (θῶ) δίκη and αἰδώς in this way among men, or am I to distribute (νείμω) them to all?”

There is repetition and symmetry of the verb νέμω. It is used four times and alternates between γενέμηνται and νείμω. Moreover, Hermes offers a synonym (θῶ) that evokes legislation⁴⁴³ which Zeus picks up on and elaborates upon (νόμον γε θές). Thus the vocabulary, while it fails to mention isonomy expressly, still suggests that what Zeus is instituting in Protagoras' democratic myth is isonomy. Similarly, Pericles at 2.37.1 explains the polity that is an example to others with a μὲν/δέ antithesis: The μὲν-clause provides the name, while the δέ-clause explicates the concept. The explication of the concept of democracy is itself divided into a μὲν/δέ antithesis, the μὲν-clause of which concessively grants that isonomy figures in the democracy, specifically in

⁴⁴¹ As the term of course later came to mean (cf. Brock 1991: 165).

⁴⁴² Protagoras was interested in language, including etymology. At *Cra.* 391b-e Socrates suggests that Hermogenes should learn from his brother Callias (another connection between Callias and Protagoras!) what Protagoras teaches on the correctness of names (ὀρθότης ὀνομάτων) in order to receive guidance in the present question whether or not language has an origin in convention or nature. Moreover, *Cra.* 385e-386a, where the human-measure doctrine is mentioned, suggests these language studies were relevant to his moral/political theory. See Kerferd 1981: 75-77.

⁴⁴³ Cf. e.g., νομοθέτης.

the legal process (μέτεστι δὲ κατὰ μὲν τοὺς νόμους πρὸς τὰ ἴδια διάφορα πᾶσι τὸ ἴσον).⁴⁴⁴ But the δέ-clause that follows indicates that, while they are related ideas, democracy and isonomy cannot, properly speaking, be considered synonymous. Isonomy, Pericles makes clear, ceases to describe the Athenian polity when it comes to office-holding. In a similar way Protagoras, though he implies that the bestowment of Dike and Aidos was the establishment of isonomy, nowhere uses the word outright and likewise assumes, especially in his flautist analogy (327a4-c4), that, if one takes office-holding at Athens into account, the word is actually a misnomer (falling short of ὀρθοέπεια?).⁴⁴⁵ Thus both Pericles and Protagoras pay respectful lip service to the older name for democracy,⁴⁴⁶ but at the same time politely reject it as semantically unfit for service.

9.2 AN ARISTOCRACY OF VIRTUE

Why do they consider it unfit for service as a descriptor of democracy? I believe Martin Ostwald's study of the first appearance of νόμος in a political sense answers this question.⁴⁴⁷ In the course of arguing that Cleisthenes was responsible for the substitution of νόμος for θέσμιον as the *vox propria* for statute in Athenian political language, Ostwald asks what ἰσονομία, a word almost indubitably associated with Cleisthenes' measures, essentially means. An examination of its first appearance (Alcmaeon frg. 4) determines that the word denotes, not an orderly balance

⁴⁴⁴ Ostwald 1969: 114n3 criticizes Gomme 1956: 109-10 for taking μέτεστι...τὸ ἴσον as referring to political equality, when it actually refers to merely judicial equality. This is a good criticism. Pericles restricts isonomy to a judicial context and so cannot, as Gomme assumes, have political equality in mind. On the other hand, Pericles cannot say κατὰ μὲν τοὺς νόμους...πᾶσι τὸ ἴσον without clearly evoking isonomy which is simply too powerful a word for one to say, with Ostwald, that Pericles simply has some other isonomy in mind. However, when the passage is read as I suggest, this problem disappears: Pericles explores the fitness of the word isonomy for democracy, concedes it has a place in the judicial branch, but determines that it does not fit the executive.

⁴⁴⁵ For Protagoras' interest in ὀρθοέπεια, see Pl. *Phdr.* 267c4-7.

⁴⁴⁶ Ostwald 1969: 97n1 lists citations for the view that isonomy was the original name for democracy.

⁴⁴⁷ 1969.

between several parts, but one between two parts opposite to each other.⁴⁴⁸ In the political sphere this manifests itself as a system of checks and balances between those who govern and those who are governed;⁴⁴⁹ and in the Cleisthenic constitution it manifested itself in the deme-based government that provided “an effective check on those who, in accordance with the census classification of the Solonian constitution, were alone eligible to the archonship and other high offices.”⁴⁵⁰ In other words, Cleisthenes did not create democracy; he merely rectified the imbalance of power between the two members of the state, the commoners and the elite. He did not throw the high offices open to the non-elite, but instead compensated them with (a) local self-government and (b) an impartial system of voting (which in Athens means both election and legislation). This explanation sheds light on why Pericles and Protagoras reject isonomy as no longer capturing the essence of democracy. Since the days of Cleisthenes the constitution has changed. It is no longer a balance, but an imbalance. There is a disparity that stands out. In the area of office-holding one group is privileged above the others.⁴⁵¹ But *this* instance of privilege is fair.

9.2.1 The Privileged Group

Who is this privileged group? In a word, it is the ones who are endowed with political ability, or virtue (ἀρετή). If the clause μέτεστι δὲ κατὰ μὲν τοὺς νόμους πρὸς τὰ ἴδια διάφορα πᾶσι τὸ ἴσον recognizes the fact that isonomy stills figures in the Athenian polity, the adversative κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἀξίωσιν that follows indicates where isonomy fails to play a part: eligibility for office. The

⁴⁴⁸ Ostwald 1969: 101.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid. 106.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid. 154.

⁴⁵¹ Related to this rejection of isonomy as an obsolescent word for democracy is an attendant re-interpretation of the word along strict etymological lines as something equally doled out, a conceptualization Pericles and Protagoras share, the former in his claim of equal standing in the Courts and the latter in his claim that every individual's sense of moral correctness has equal validity. In other words, they both prefer the “new” meaning of isonomy.

scholarly consensus appears to be that ἀξίωσις here refers to personal distinction; or, as the Oxyrhynchus commentator glosses it, one's ἀξία.⁴⁵² However, too much respect has been paid to the Oxyrhynchus commentator. If ἀξίωσις means distinction, several ineloquent inconcinnities result: (a) the “judicial branch” (κατὰ μὲν τοὺς νόμους) which sets up the first part of the antithesis is answered, not by a reference to another branch, but by the criterion (κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἀξίωσιν) in an as yet unspecified branch of government; (b) the clause ὡς ἕκαστος ἔν τῳ εὐδοκίμῳ becomes, not epexegetic, but simply redundant; (c) there emerges no appreciable difference between ἀξίωσις and ἀξίωμα in the following clause; and finally (d) election to office is then signified by the phrase ἐς τὰ κοινὰ...προτιμᾶται which is too broad to be taken on its own to refer only to Athenian χειροτονία. Maurice Pope rightly criticizes this reading:

[T]he result of these misrepresentations (if we took them seriously) would be to give us an absurd picture of the στρατηγία as a kind of Committee of All Talents and at the same time to make Pericles guilty of a monstrous libel on the Athenian δῆμος which contained vastly more than ten people who were particularly good at something (ὅστις ἔν τῳ εὐδοκίμῳ).”⁴⁵³

But if one takes ἀξίωσις as a *vox media* and to mean, not rank, but ranking – that is, the act of determining what each person's rank, or ἀξίωμα, is – these problems disappear. Κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἀξίωσιν broaches the topic of eligibility for office.

What offices? Those who take ἀξίωσις to signify rank or status feel that only the elective offices could here be meant.⁴⁵⁴ However, as it is better to take the word as a *vox media* meaning eligibility, then it would appear that Pericles refers to *all the offices*. But in that case a question is raised about the sortitive offices. Seeing that the lot figured so large in Athens, how can Pericles speak as though ability was the only qualification? The lottery might promote men who were

⁴⁵² See Gomme 1956: 108; Rusten 1989: 145 (“popular esteem”); Hornblower 1991: 300 (“the claim of excellence”). For the Oxyrhynchus commentator, see Hude 1927: 131.

⁴⁵³ 1988: 292.

⁴⁵⁴ So e.g., Gomme 1956: 108; Rusten 1989: 146.

absolute idiots. Harris considers it an omission and dismisses it as a “venial instance of *suppressio veri*,” permissible in the rhetorical context of a funeral oration.⁴⁵⁵ This zealous *suppressio veri* may very well be. But an alternative explanation is simply that Pericles means what he says, that the Athenian official, whether he has gained his position by election or by lot, has gained it because of his ability.⁴⁵⁶ The *onus* is on us to explain how this might be.

V. Lynne Snyder Abel did some interesting work on this topic in the 1980s. She argued that as of 487/6 the archons, and probably all sortitive offices, were not appointed by pure sortition, but by a procedure known to the writer of *Ath. Pol.* as κλήρωσις ἐκ προκρίτων (the drawing of lots from a short-list).⁴⁵⁷ This procedure entailed the nomination of candidates by the demes⁴⁵⁸ to stand for the lottery of offices. For example, in the case of the 9 archons the total nominees presented by the demes numbered 500. Sortition by tribe then reduced the number to 100 (each tribe drawing 10 lots from the initial 50); then sortition again produced 10 (9 archons + secretary).⁴⁵⁹ Thus sortition after an initial selection of appropriate candidates by the demes (πρόκρισις) took much of the randomness out of the process. “It formed a sophisticated procedure which both secured candidates of general ability and integrity and, except for the periods of the tyranny and the oligarchies, eliminated from the appointment undue influence of money or political philosophy.”⁴⁶⁰ If this mode of sortition was practiced at the time of Pericles’ funeral speech, then Pericles can indeed consider sortition a way of producing magistrates of ability.

⁴⁵⁵ 1992: 165-66.

⁴⁵⁶ Raubitschek 1969: 90 offers a very similar reading of the clause.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ath. Pol.* 8.1; Abel 1983: 59. Cf. Isoc. *Areop.* 22, who says that the Athenians who administered the city by the Solonian/Cleisthenic constitution (§16) did so οὐκ ἐξ ἀπάντων τὰς ἀρχὰς κληροῦντες, ἀλλὰ τοὺς βελτίστους καὶ τοὺς ἱκανωτάτους ἐφ’ ἑκάστον τῶν ἔργων προκρίνοντες.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ath. Pol.* 22.5; Abel: 1983: 36, 71; Staveland 1972: 38, 239 n. 59; Lang 1959: 88-89. For counter-arguments, see Rhodes 1981: 273.

⁴⁵⁹ Abel 1983: 36.

⁴⁶⁰ Abel 1983: 83.

The question hinges on whether it was in fact practiced during his lifetime. It is last attested in 458/7.⁴⁶¹ The general view is that sometime after 458/7 and before the fourth century κλήρωσις ἐκ προκρίτων was replaced with simple sortition, and in the case of archons with a preliminary sortition (προκλήρωσις).⁴⁶² Exactly when, however, the change took place is unknown. Abel argues that a change never took place and that κλήρωσις ἐκ προκρίτων continued down to the archonship of Demetrius of Phalerum in 309/8 BC. A few scholars disagree,⁴⁶³ but while they are not convinced by her arguments that sortition was so practiced in the fourth century, they are silent about her arguments concerning the fifth century.⁴⁶⁴ Her arguments are quite plausible, though.⁴⁶⁵ She points out that in the constitution which Pisander's junta offered the reluctant⁴⁶⁶ Athenians in 411 not just the important military officers, such as the generals, but the lesser, civic officers such as the archons, were to be determined by lot from a short-list drawn from the Five Thousand.⁴⁶⁷ Similarly, she notes that according to *Ath. Pol.* 35.1 the one constitutional act carried out by the Thirty was the allotment⁴⁶⁸ of the councilors and other offices from a short-list of the One Thousand.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶¹ *Ath. Pol.* 26.2.

⁴⁶² Hignett 1958: 227; Rhodes 1981: 274.

⁴⁶³ Lewis 1984: 344-45; Rhodes 1985b: 378-79; Hansen 1986b: 222-29.

⁴⁶⁴ For the view, anticipating Abel, that it was practiced in the fifth century, see Burnet 1924: 147; Raubitschek 1969: 89-90.

⁴⁶⁵ Abel 1983: 41-47.

⁴⁶⁶ Th. 8.53.2: ἀντιλεγόντων δὲ πολλῶν καὶ ἄλλων περὶ τῆς δημοκρατίας. In the face of such reluctance it is understandable why the constitution Pisander offered was only quantitatively, not qualitatively, different from the Athenian democracy (and for that reason never actually set up).

⁴⁶⁷ Abel 1983: 41 on *Ath. Pol.* 30.2, which uses the words αἰρεῖσθαι... ἐκ προκρίτων. For αἰρεῖσθαι as a general word for appointment in both elective and sortitive offices, cf. *Ath. Pol.* 26.2 and see Abel 1983: 19. For a counter-view, see Rhodes 1981: 392 who see in αἰρεῖσθαι a contrast to κληρωτάς later in the sentence, but this contrast is rather between sortitive offices from a short-list and sortitive offices without any such preliminary stage of selection. For, taking αἰρεῖσθαι as Rhodes does entails a double election which in the case of just five thousand full citizens would be time-consuming and superfluous. It is better to take αἰρεῖσθαι with Wilamowitz (as cited in Abel 1983: 19) as a *media vox*.

⁴⁶⁸ The word used is καθιστάναι which, Abel maintains, is a general word that can mean both allot and elect. The Erythrae decree of 453/2 BC confirms her argument (*IG I³*. 14.13 [= ML 40]).

⁴⁶⁹ Abel 1983: 45-46.

In addition to Abel's work one should consider a passage of Plato's *Apology* where Socrates explains to the jury why he does not implore their mercy or present his children so as to arouse their pity. It's not because he is arrogant or disdainful of them, but because he must be consistent with his reputation for wisdom and bravery, unlike other Athenians who claim special distinction in virtue, but break down when they are on trial. Seeing these things, he says, a stranger might get the impression "that those of the Athenians who stand out in virtue, whom they rank (προκρίνουσιν) above themselves in their offices and in their other honors, are no different than women" (35b1-3). As Burnet aptly comments, "the term προκρίνειν is technical for the drawing up of a 'short-leet' (*sic*), and unless this had been done by voting or some equally deliberate method of selection, the argument would be absurd."⁴⁷⁰

Taken together, these arguments suggest that κλήρωσις in Athens was conducted ἐκ προκρίτων until at least 399 BC and that consequently until that time there was provision at the level of the demes for appointing men of good standing and reputation in their demes to stand in the tribal lottery. The assertion at *Ath. Pol.* 62.1, that at some date the right to draw up a list, that is, the right of πρόκρισις, was taken from the demes, because they were selling the slots, and was given to the tribes, points in the same direction: What they were supposed to be doing with deliberate judgment they were doing with bribery.⁴⁷¹ The implication this re-examination of sortition in Athens has on the funeral speech is clear. Pericles can lump the sortitive and elective offices together and claim that they are filled on a basis of ability because in both procedures there are provisions, whether real or token, for securing adequate magistrates. Therefore,

⁴⁷⁰ 1924: 147. Cf. Raubitschek 1969: 90.

⁴⁷¹ Certain passages of the *Ath. Pol.* report that the πρόκρισις was conducted on a tribal level (8.1, 22.5, 62.1). Abel 1983: 36-37, following the reconstruction of Lang 1959: 88-89, offers the explanation that the allotment took place on a tribal level, but the πρόκρισις was on a deme level, until because of bribery that responsibility as well was transferred to the tribes.

regarding the original question of which offices Pericles has in mind here the answer is simply: All of them.

What Pericles says the criterion of office-holding is *not* now comes into focus. One is put forward in office, he claims, on the basis of ability (ἀπ' ἀρετῆς), not ἀπὸ μέρους. Recent commentators take ἀπὸ μέρους to mean “in rotation” and interpret Pericles to be disavowing the use of the lot in high office (i.e., offices requiring ἀξίωσις).⁴⁷² Again, the Oxyrhynchus commentator has been followed, and again too closely.⁴⁷³ For not only does this interpretation misconstrue ἀξίωσις, as I just discussed, but it also strains not just ordinary Greek usage, but, as Harris points out, Thucydidean usage as well, who either expresses the idea of “in rotation” with ἐν τῷ μέρει/ἐν μέρει or κατὰ μέρος.⁴⁷⁴ It is much more natural then to take ἀπὸ μέρους as nineteenth-century commentators took it, viz. as referring to a group.⁴⁷⁵ Pericles will then be saying that ability alone is the criterion for office-holding, not membership in an economic or birth nobility. What he disavows then is wealth (πλοῦτος) and birth (εὐγένεια). Ability is the only recommendation.

At least, it is *practically* the only recommendation needed. In 457/6 the third of the four Solonian revenue brackets, the *zeugitae*, were admitted to the college of archons.⁴⁷⁶ But the significant portion of the population that comprised the fourth Solonian bracket, the *thētes*, remained ineligible. This restriction, while it was never formally repealed, but always remained

⁴⁷² Flashar 1969: 18; Gomme 1956: 108; Rusten 1989: 145; Hornblower 1991: 300.

⁴⁷³ Hude 1927: 131: οὐ κατὰ τὸ μέρος τὸ ἐπιβάλλον ἴσον αὐτῷ τῆς π[ολι]τείας.

⁴⁷⁴ Harris 1992: 166. For examples of the former, see Th. 4.11.3; 8.86.3, 93.2 and of the latter, Th. 3.46.3; 4.26.3. For Thucydides' use of μέρος to mean “part of the citizenry,” see 6.39.1, 2. So too a few years before, Pope: 1988: 292.

⁴⁷⁵ Poppo-Stahl 1875-83 ad loc interpret it as “secundum ordinem cuius est;” Classen-Steup “durch Unterstützung von der einen Seite, der einen politischen Partei” (1892-1922 ad loc), Marchant “not on account of his rank as much as” (1891 ad loc).

⁴⁷⁶ *Ath. Pol.* 26.2. It is likely that Solon's classes, originally based on real property, were subsequently converted to revenue categories. Cf. Hignett 1952: 142-43, 225-26; Rhodes 1981: 142.

“on the books,” had fallen into desuetude by the time the *Ath. Pol.* was composed.⁴⁷⁷ Just when it did so is not known for certain, but P. J. Rhodes places it sometime in the course of the fourth-century.⁴⁷⁸ That being the case, the *thētes* would then be the target of Pericles’ final point about Athenian office-holding: οὐδ’ αὖ κατὰ πενίαν, ἔχων δέ⁴⁷⁹ τι ἀγαθὸν δρᾶσαι τὴν πόλιν, ἀξιώματος ἀφανεία κεκόλυται. The *thēs* (κατὰ πενίαν), though kept from holding office by the obscurity that attaches to his revenue bracket (ἀξιώματος ἀφανεία), is nevertheless not hindered from being entrusted with civic responsibilities in other areas, if (δέ) he can. Ἀξίωσις has become ἀξίωμα for good reason. It is no longer a question of ranking, but the thing ranked, the revenue. In other words, ἀξίωμα is a Thucydidean calque for the regular Athenian τίμημα. And the “other areas” to which Pericles refers, since they occur in a passage treating office-holding, must refer to the holding of office.⁴⁸⁰ This means that Pericles is hinting that the state will make an exception to the rule, should there be a *thēs* of ability. By this means, while giving his approbation to the exclusion of the thetic bracket from office-holding, Pericles at one and the same time affirms their dignity and worth by asserting their right to hold office despite the formal restriction.

Athens then is a paradox. On the one hand power lies in the hands of the entire citizenry, on the other it privileges a certain group above the rest and so for that reason has outgrown its Cleisthenic designation as an ἰσονομία. However, that privileged group is those who have been determined by their fellow-citizens (ὥς ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ εὐδοκίμῳ) to have the competence and ability to hold office, no matter what economic or social class they belong to, not even if they

⁴⁷⁷ Cf. *Ath. Pol.* 47.1.

⁴⁷⁸ 1981: 145-46, 551. The “Old Oligarch’s” words δοκεῖ δίκαιον εἶναι πᾶσι τῶν ἀρχῶν μετεῖναι ἐν τε τῷ κλήρῳ καὶ ἐν τῇ χειροτονίᾳ (1.2) might suggest a more specific date, if there were anything like a consensus regarding the date of composition of that work. For a summary of dates suggested, see Gray 2007: 57-58.

⁴⁷⁹ See Gomme 1956: 110 for reasons for retaining the MSS reading here.

⁴⁸⁰ Cf. Harris 1992: 161. But Harris’ view that income restrictions were *formally* lifted by the late fifth-century is based on a misreading of Rhodes 1981: 145-46, 551 (165n24). Pericles means the system is flexible and can make exceptions.

earn their living on the docks of Munychia, provided they have convinced their peers that they are able. Ἱσονομία no longer fits because Athens has graduated and become an aristocracy of, by and for the people. Athens is thus an oxymoron, an aristocratic democracy.

9.2.2 Protagoras and Pericles' aristocratic democracy

The three ideas on which Pericles bases his aristocratic democracy are (a) confidence in the political ability of the individual; (b) the vindication of natural endowment (εὐφυΐα) over the artificial prerogatives of wealth and social class; and (c) the secular and instrumental view of money. Each of these ideas has its counterpart in Protagoras' political theory.

Confidence in the political ability of the ordinary Athenian citizen is the theme that underlies and sustains all of 2.37.1. It emerges from Pericles' proud use of the term δημοκρατία and from his claim that Athens is an example to others because of this "People-Power." It also appears indirectly from his assertion that Athenian officials are drawn from the whole citizen population, no matter the class, as long as they meet the one requirement of ability. Moreover, just as it lays the conceptual groundwork for this passage, so it does for the speech as a whole. It is the assumption that allows Pericles' speech to peak at the claim that the individual Athenian is more than equal to any task that presents itself (2.42.1; cf. Periclean autarky in subsection 8.2.2). Protagoras similarly postulated the basic political capacity of the individual. This idea not only lies at the heart of the mythos he tells in the *Protagoras*, where the universal bestowment of δίκη and αἰδώς signifies the accidental formation of communities which were absolutely impossible unless they incorporated on an equal basis the individual's assessment of reality (see chapter 4). But the idea also comes out in plainer terms as well. At 322d7-323a4 Protagoras asserts the rectitude in every man's participating in the deliberative and legislative branches when he

approves of the Athenians' practice of doing so.⁴⁸¹ He also maintains that the individual is qualified to occupy positions of authority in the city. When introducing the analogy of the city of flautists, he asks Socrates to accept hypothetically his claim that *τούτου τοῦ πράγματος, τῆς ἀρετῆς, εἰ μέλλει πόλις εἶναι, οὐδένα δεῖ ιδιωτεύειν* (327a1-2). That he means by this statement that nobody ought to be excluded from public duties, including those involving positions of authority, soon becomes clear, when he rephrases it more fully in the terms of the analogy: "If it were impossible for there to be a city unless we were all flautists and everybody both privately and publicly taught this and reprimanded whoever did not play well..." (327a4-7). The citizens are to instruct one another; but they are also to punish one another.⁴⁸² The citizens are responsible for each other and are authorized to wield authority over each other. The reason for this is because, as I discuss in chapter five, societal education and correction preserve the unanimity of the group (see sections 5.2, 5.3) and the unanimity of the group is the salvation of the group (see sections 4.3, 4.4). In the democratic community as envisioned by Protagoras the ordinary person was an integral part of the system at all levels. *Τὸ ιδιωτεύειν* was a threat to its very existence.

On the score of the individual's political ability another point of contact emerges in the way the two men envision how that ability is to be determined. Pericles makes the opinion of one's fellow-citizens the basis of determining ability when he declares that each person is put forward to stand for the election or lottery of office *ὡς ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ εὐδοκίμῳ*. The word choice is arresting. It recalls the opinion (*δόξα*) of both sides that he is aiming to satisfy in this speech, as well as his rejection of objective truth for subjective truth (*ἡ δόκησις τῆς ἀληθείας*) (see subsections 8.1.1, 11.1.2). Likewise, by emphasizing the fact that one is put forward for

⁴⁸¹ He repeats this view at 323c3-5 and in no uncertain terms at 324c5-d1.

⁴⁸² *ἐπέπληττε* of course signifies only verbal correction (LSJ s.v. II), but it represents the real-life analogue of formal correction.

office by the subjectively arrived-at belief in one's ability, he de-emphasizes any objective assessment of one's ability. One is able in Athens, if one is thought by his fellow-citizens to be able. Protagoras' human-measure claim holds good for the election and selection of officials, too.

In maintaining that Athens' excellence resides in its reliance on ability, from whatever class it comes, as the sole criterion for office-holding, Pericles simultaneously asserts the prerogative of natural endowment (εὐφροσύνη) over against membership in a wealth or birth nobility. This is the most powerful idea in the passage. It is a total rejection of the aristocratic principle, surviving in the Greek consciousness since the Archaic period, but still very much alive in the Classical,⁴⁸³ that located ability, and therefore worth, in one's genetic inheritance. It also denied the claim of wealth, since Pericles does not disdain the members of any Solonian revenue bracket. Ἀρετή can be, and so should be, found at all social and at all economic levels; from the whole, not ὑπὸ μέρους. Protagoras agreed. He goes on in the analogy of the city of flautists to explain to Socrates why noteworthy fathers have unremarkable sons. If it is granted that for there to be a city everybody must take part in instruction and correction of his fellow-citizens, then in such a city it will invariably happen that some individuals prove noteworthy and others quite unremarkable. What makes the difference is not paternity, but natural endowment (εὐφροσύνη) (327b7-c4). The fairness of this supposition proves that Protagoras is right. Political ability is not genetic, but a thing taught, and just as in all other artistic and intellectual skills, one can be by natural endowment more proficient than another.⁴⁸⁴ Pericles expresses this same sentiment, when he says that, while there are certain economic restrictions in eligibility, in the final analysis it is ability that qualifies the office-holder, not the income.

⁴⁸³ See Sophocles' *Ajax* 430-524 for an *agon* between aristocratic and non-aristocratic *Weltanschauungen*.

⁴⁸⁴ See subsection 5.4.3 and section 6.2 for a resolution of the apparent inconsistency in Protagoras' claims that the individual's assessment of reality is veridical and that certain individuals can be called "wiser," which does not mean however that the "wiser" is more proficient, in absolute terms, than another. Natural endowment simply means that one is by chance constitutionally fit for the environment he happened to be born in (subsection 5.4.3).

Why then even have the economic restrictions? Pericles may hint that in the case of a particularly proficient *thēs* the restriction will be overlooked, but it remains that he finds no fault with the current ranking of eligibility that stops at the *zeugitae*. It is thus implied that, while he disavows income as the *sine qua non* of eligibility, he does nonetheless accord it a modicum of significance. It exerts an influence, and moreover an influence that makes a difference at the *zeugitēs/thēs* divide rather than at the *pentacosiomedimnos/hippeus* divide. Thus his view of income is instrumental. As such it differs from an aristocratic view of wealth which presupposes an intimate, indissoluble bond between good birth and money (and is outraged when that presupposition is challenged⁴⁸⁵), as well as from a corporate, or “stock-holding” view, in that it qualifies one at the lower rather than higher end.

Protagoras had a similar instrumental view of money, as is made clear when in the *Protagoras* he explains to Socrates how political ability is passed from one generation to the next. Parents, he says, teach it to their children until the children are committed to teachers. Whereupon the *grammatistai* teach it through letters and poetry, the *kitharistai* through harmony and poetry and finally the *paidotribai* through physical activities. At this point (326c3) he notes that the more income one has, the better able he is to acquire such an education for his children: καὶ ταῦτα ποιοῦσιν οἱ μάλιστα δυνάμενοι μάλιστα (326c3-6).⁴⁸⁶ Income matters. It qualifies one for more civic responsibility, but not because it is proof of membership in a certain class or of inherent excellence, but for the simple reason that it makes possible a longer education. Money is just a tool for Protagoras, too.

⁴⁸⁵ E.g. *Theognidea* 53-68, on which see Donlan 1980: 80-82.

⁴⁸⁶ There is a tendency to place too heavy an emphasis on the superlatives in this passage. For example, Taylor translates: “The people who are *best* able to do it – I mean, the *wealthiest* – do this especially, and their sons begin to go to school at the *earliest* age and stay there the *longest*.” But these superlatives are in comparative clauses and so express more an idea of correlation, than absolute superiority (KG 1904: 498, Anmerk. 2). A better translation is: “And the more that men are able, the more they do this [i.e., send their sons to teachers] - and the more money men have, the more able they are - and the earlier their sons begin going to the teachers and the later they depart.” Though awkward in English, this translation at least captures the correlative aspect of the sentence.

And specifically, it is a tool for education which Protagoras regarded as a gradual indoctrination in the norms and values of the polis one happens to reside in (see subsections 5.3.2, 5.4.2, 5.4.3). There is some suggestion that Pericles as well put a high premium on money not just because it was practical and instrumental, but because of its instrumental value specifically for education. At 2.40.1 Pericles makes the famous claim in the name of the Athenians:

Φιλοκαλοῦμέν τε γὰρ μετ' εὐτελείας καὶ φιλοσοφοῦμεν ἄνευ μαλακίας· πλούτῳ τε ἔργου μᾶλλον καιρῷ ἢ λόγου κόμπῳ χρώμεθα, καὶ τὸ πένεσθαι οὐχ ὁμολογεῖν τινὶ αἰσχρόν, ἀλλὰ μὴ διαφεύγειν ἔργῳ αἴσχιον. ἔνι τε τοῖς αὐτοῖς οἰκείων ἅμα καὶ πολιτικῶν ἐπιμέλεια, κτλ.

J. S. Rusten has seen in this passage three distinct groups, those who pursue the contemplative life, those who pursue a life of trade and those who pursue a life of politics, thinking it

“preposterous to hold – as many seem implicitly to do – that the simultaneous pursuit of philosophy, wealth and political power is here ascribed to *every single citizen* of Athens.”⁴⁸⁷

However, the fact that Pericles at 2.42.2 praises the fallen for their correct attitude towards wealth clearly indicates that he does in fact mean to ascribe this virtue to all Athenians, not just merchants. Moreover, Johannes Kakridis is surely right when he observes a close conceptual relationship between the first two clauses that is problematic for Rusten’s distinct groups: “Die durch πλούτῳ τε...eingeleitete Periode bildet gewissermaßen eine breitere Auslegung des Begriffes ἄνευ μαλακίας.”⁴⁸⁸ Pericles has just praised the Athenians for their frugal φιλοκαλία and manly φιλοσοφία. When in his next breath he says the Athenians regard wealth as an opportunity for achievement rather than grounds for boasting, he is explaining why their φιλοκαλία is frugal and their φιλοσοφία is manly, to wit: They have a pragmatic, instrumental view of money. Adding γάρ would have made the relationship clearer, but it also would have

⁴⁸⁷ 1985: 17 followed by Hornblower 1991: 304-5.

⁴⁸⁸ 1961: 51.

emphasized the second virtue above the first, when Pericles instead wants to ascribe the two virtues equally to the Athenians. In other words, the ἄνω τελεία after μαλακίας that Jones prints should not be replaced with a period.⁴⁸⁹

If then Kakridis' reading is correct (as I think it is), Pericles praises the Athenians for having an instrumental attitude of money *in the context of education*. They value wealth for what it can produce, for its ἔργον. That ἔργον is a self-cultivation and self-education that are frugal and manly, respectively. Like Protagoras Pericles suggests that one of the chief applications, if not the chief application, of money is education. It is therefore quite possible that he approves of the (flexible) exclusion of the *thētes* from office because it ensures that those who hold office are those who have a modicum of education. Now, whether or not he regards that education to be a Protagorean type of indoctrination, he simply does not say; however, considering that the type of education at issue is not a course of advance learning, but merely of a kind that distinguishes a *thēs* from a *zeugitēs* (or rather a *πένης* from a poorer *πένης*), that type of education appears to be a distinct possibility.

9.2.3 Pericles and Plato's *Menexenus*

To conclude this section, Pericles' characterization of Athens as an aristocratic democracy consists of three ideas, each of which suggests Protagorean influence. First, Pericles' confidence in the ordinary citizen's ability reflects Protagoras' community of self-sufficient individuals and moreover Pericles' use of opinion as that which determines whether or not one is politically able reminds one of the sophist's predication of that community on an ethical and ontological relativism. Secondly, εὐφροῦν is important for both, even if that is ultimately determined by one's

⁴⁸⁹ This reading is not affected if one, following Rusten (pp. 14-15), regards the τε's as the connectives of the clauses. Only, instead of indicating distinct and unrelated ideas, they merely neutralize the relationship and leave the reader to determine it conceptually.

peers. Finally, they share an instrumental view of money and regard education as that instrument's chief work. These similarities suggest that Pericles' aristocratic democracy owes no small debt to Protagoras.

This debt is likewise suggested by an external source. In the *Menexenus* Socrates delivers a funeral speech which, while making several allusions to the genre as a whole, is really a parody of the Periclean speech in Thucydides⁴⁹⁰ and is meant, as Lucinda Coventry rightly argues, as a condemnation of politics and rhetoric and should not be regarded as a serious Platonic presentation of an ideal Athens.⁴⁹¹ In this condemnation Socrates, in the *persona* of a *rhētor*, makes several claims about the Athenian government that not only recall Pericles' claims, but bring out at the same time their Protagorean indebtedness.

An important feature about Athens that Socrates highlights is the fact that the city is populated by similar people. Αἱ μὲν γὰρ ἄλλαι πόλεις ἐκ παντοδαπῶν κατεσκευασμέναι ἀνθρώπων εἰσὶ καὶ ἀνωμάτων, ὥστε αὐτῶν ἀνώμαλοι καὶ αἱ πολιτεῖαι, τυραννίδες τε καὶ ὀλιγαρχίαι (238e1-4). The Athenians, however, are by implication different. They are like each other. The reason is that they are all born of the same mother (μῑᾱς μητρὸς πάντες ἀδελφοὶ φύντες) (239a1). This autochthony of theirs,⁴⁹² in explaining why they are so alike, also explains their status *vis-à-vis* each other: ἀλλ' ἡ ἰσογονία ἡμᾶς ἡ κατὰ φύσιν ἰσονομίαν ἀναγκάζει ζητεῖν κατὰ νόμον (239a2-3). In short, the Athenians enjoy equality among themselves because they have a common origin, common experiences, a common outlook. This notion of equality based on likeness of experiences and outlook suggests that Plato here has in mind Protagoras'

⁴⁹⁰ This appears to be what Plato implies when he has Socrates deliver a speech he heard from Aspasia which she pasted together from scraps (περιλείμματ' ἄττα) from one she composed for Pericles. Cf. Vlastos 1973: 191; Coventry 1989: 3.

⁴⁹¹ 1989: 9.

⁴⁹² V. J. Rosivach 1987: 294-306 makes the surprising argument that autochthony was an idea that did not develop until well into the fifth century and, interestingly, as a part of the democratic ideology and self-identity. If he is correct (and his arguments, especially the etymological one (297-301), are plausible), then it is further support for Protagorean influence.

formulation of human cities as an accidental meeting and agreeing between same-minded individuals (subsection 4.3.4), as well as his interpretation of societal education as a means by which the city preserves that original agreement (subsection 5.3.2). Thus in the one passage Plato encapsulates the entire mythos and logos he has Protagoras deliver *in extenso* in the *Protagoras*.

The Protagorean reminiscence continues when Socrates moves into the thick of the Periclean parody. The Athenians' equality (ἰσονομία) is the reason (αἰτία) why their form of government (πολιτεία) is what it is (238d9). Some may call it a democracy, others may call it by a different name; but in essence it is, and has always been,⁴⁹³ an aristocracy. Athens has always been ruled by kings. In the past these kings were by birth, now they are appointed (αἰρετοί) (238d2-3).⁴⁹⁴ This aristocracy has the approval of the people (μετ' εὐδοξίας πλῆθους) who hold the power and confer office and authority on whoever seems to be the best (τοῖς ἀεὶ δόξασιν ἀρίστοις εἶναι) (238d5). So far, Socrates appears to be saying that there is a ruling elite in Athens who however are dependent on the people for their power. However, his next point shows that this cannot be. Καὶ οὔτε ἀσθενεία, he says, οὔτε πενία οὔτ' ἀγνωσία πατέρων ἀπελήλαται οὐδείς οὐδὲ τοῖς ἐναντίοις τετίμηται (238d5-7). Nobody is excluded either by weakness or poverty or low birth from being one of these kings. He repeats a second time: ὁ δόξας σοφὸς ἢ ἀγαθὸς εἶναι κρατεῖ καὶ ἄρχει (238d8), and a third: καὶ μηδενὶ ἄλλῳ ὑπείκειν ἀλλήλοις ἢ ἀρετῆς δόξῃ καὶ φρονήσεως (239a3-4). In short, Socrates praises Athens as an aristocracy of political ability, or more literally, virtue (ἀρετῆς). And one's virtue does not depend on class or status, but on his convincing his peers that he has it.

⁴⁹³ For Theseus as the founder of Athenian democracy, see Walker 1995: 50-55.

⁴⁹⁴ Jones 1953: 48-49, taking αἰρετοί in the restricted sense (see above n421), considers these "kings" to be all the elected officials in Athens, while earlier commentators saw a reference to just the college of archons (see e.g. Shawyer 1906 ad loc), one of whom still held the title. It is more likely that both views are correct and that Socrates/Aspasia is speaking generally about anybody who holds any office in Athens, since there are absolutely no restrictions on this position. For this view, cf. Kagan 1965: 80.

Socrates' aristocracy of virtue is very similar to Pericles' aristocratic democracy. In both the people are the ultimate constitutional authority. It is up to them to hand out the power of office. These office-holders come from all the income brackets and from all the classes. They are given office because of their ability alone. No other factor enters into consideration. And because of that ability they are considered kings (βασιλῆς). But at this point Socrates' picture of Athens recalls Protagoras a second time in its emphasis on opinion. Within the compass of so short a passage Socrates has stressed four times the fact that what passes for political ability in Athens is what is determined to be such in the opinion of the sovereign people, just as Pericles had asserted that one's ability was determined ὡς ἕκαστος ἔν τῳ εὐδοκίμει.⁴⁹⁵ Plato's criticism is clear. There is no rational standard for political ability in Athens, yet demagogic orators continue nonetheless to depict the government in idealistic terms,⁴⁹⁶ in which they are greatly facilitated by the authority Protagorean relativism has bestowed upon the consensus of the Athenian citizenry. In this way Plato's parody of Pericles in the *Menexenus*, drawn as it is along Protagorean lines, gives support to the interpretation of Pericles' description of Athenian government in 2.37.1 as a Protagorean aristocracy of virtue.

9.3 PERICLEAN JUSTICE

In the following two sentences of 2.37 Pericles characterizes the Athenians' sense of justice in the two aspects of social and legal interaction. The characterization of the Athenians' social interaction directly recalls Protagorean φιλία in his mythos in that the Athenians need no formal rules to dictate their behavior towards each other, but act in concord spontaneously. Similarly,

⁴⁹⁵ Lucinda Coventry 1989: 12 brings this point out particularly well.

⁴⁹⁶ For similar criticism of Pericles by Plato, see *Grg.* 516b8-d4, 518e1-519d5.

the characterization of their legal interaction reflects on both the verbal and conceptual plane Protagoras' definition of justice given in the mythos of the *Protagoras*. Specifically, Pericles reveals certain assumptions regarding penology, the Athenians' attitude to law and the validity of the laws that resonate with the Protagorean mythos.

9.3.1 Athenian Social Interaction

Pericles broaches the subject of their social interaction with a transitional sentence (2.37.2):

ἐλευθέρως δὲ τὰ τε πρὸς τὸ κοινὸν πολιτεύομεν καὶ ἐς τὴν πρὸς ἀλλήλους τῶν
καθ' ἡμέραν ἐπιτηδευμάτων ὑποψίαν κτλ.

Since τὰ τε πρὸς τὸ κοινὸν refers to the political sphere which he has just treated and καὶ ἐς τὴν...ὑποψίαν introduces a new topic, it is clear that ἐλευθέρως does double duty. With its meaning of political freedom it sums up what has gone before and with its meaning of wellborn gentility it typifies Athenian society.⁴⁹⁷ Through this *double entendre* the speaker intimates that the one is the consequence of the other. Athenian society is marked by liberal gentility *because* their government is an aristocracy of virtue.

Furthermore, Pericles claims that the Athenians are exempt from ill-feeling (ὑποψία) regarding each other's private pursuits (τῶν καθ' ἡμέραν ἐπιτηδευμάτων). By this he means that, if a neighbor conducts himself as he likes, they do not get angry and reciprocally they do not bring on themselves "griefs which, while harmless, are sad to behold."⁴⁹⁸ The Athenians are

⁴⁹⁷ Contrast Hornblower 1991: 301.

⁴⁹⁸ The phrase is thus quite close to Andromache's lament (Eur. *An.* 395-96): τί δέ με καὶ τεκεῖν ἐχρῆν/ἄχθος τ' ἐπ' ἄχθει τῷδε προσθέσθαι διπλοῦν; For ἄχθιδὼν as the poetic equivalent of ἄχθος, see Marchant 1891 (ad loc). Rusten 1989: 147, following LSJ (s.v. προστίθημι B. II. 2), interprets Pericles to be saying that the Athenians do not put "upon our faces attitudes of disappointment, which inflict no punishment but are nonetheless irritating." Cf. Oxyrhynchus Commentator (Hude 1927: 132). But this translation ignores the emphatic position of τῇ ὄψει, lowers the register of λυπηρὸς (grievous) to that of ἀνιερὸς or ὀχληρὸς (irritating), and in general introduces the banal, almost comical, note of giving dirty looks in a passage that occupies a higher plane, whereas the point is that Athenians do not engage in behavior that will arouse the disapproval of the group, visual not just in looks, but in behavior as well.

mutually considerate. On the one hand, they are tolerant of variant behavior; on the other, they are careful not to abuse that tolerance, go too far and make themselves pariahs in their communities. They are not nearly as uniform as Sparta. They allow variation. Nevertheless, they still achieve a likeness in their community that moreover has the advantage over the Spartans in being self-willed. One side is tolerant and the other side does not take advantage of that tolerance. This is a genuine friendship, not forced, which reflects the reason why Zeus, according to Protagoras, sent δίκη and αἰδώς, to earth: so that there might be configurations and friendship-bonds (δεσμοὶ φιλίας συναγωγοί) of cities (322c3) (see subsection 4.3.4). Sparta is a place of forced friendship; Athens is a place of spontaneous, unprompted friendship.

9.3.2 Athenian Legal Interaction

Considering the Protagorean connection between φιλία and δίκη and αἰδώς, it is not surprising that Pericles makes a transition at this point to the Athenians' attitude towards these very entities. He recapitulates again what he has just said (ἀνεπαχθῶς δὲ τὰ ἴδια προσομιλοῦντες) and claims as its by-product the Athenians' law-abidingness: τὰ δημόσια διὰ δέος μάλιστα οὐ παρανομοῦμεν. Hornblower is right when he notes that δέος can hardly be watered down to mean respect or reverence.⁴⁹⁹ It means fear, and with this meaning establishes a link with Protagoras. For, it is difficult to understand how Pericles can be so ingenuous in his approbation of fear without positing a positive view of punishment. Pericles is assuming that punishment has a constructive role to play in Athenian justice and his positive assumption is consistent with Protagorean penology. According to Protagoras κόλασις is one of the two aspects of societal education, praise (ἔπαινος) being the other, which the polis is authorized to practice because otherwise it cannot perpetuate the package of norms and values which made possible its original

⁴⁹⁹ 1991: 302. For an example of what Hornblower has in mind, see Ehrenberg 1954: 40.

coalescence and will guarantee its continued survival (cf. subsection 5.3.2). Fear is a good thing and it is to the Athenians' credit that they realize it.

The Athenians' law-abidingness extends both to those in office (τῶν τε αἰεὶ ἐν ἀρχῇ ὄντων ἀκροάσει) and particularly to ὅσοι ἐπ' ὠφελίᾳ τῶν ἀδικουμένων κεῖνται καὶ ὅσοι ἄγραφοι ὄντες αἰσχύνῃν ὁμολογουμένην φέρουσιν. In other words, there is a condition the laws must meet in order to deserve the Athenians' obedience. They must be legitimate laws. And they are legitimate if they serve the interests of δίκη (evoked in τῶν ἀδικουμένων) and αἰδώς (evoked in αἰσχύνῃν).⁵⁰⁰ The Protagorean verbal echo in this passage has already been observed.⁵⁰¹ But beyond the verbal level there are several significant parallels between Pericles' and Protagoras' conception of justice. The first involves another, this time indirect, verbal echo. It has been recognized that what Pericles says here about the Athenians is meant to be compared with what Archidamus says about the Spartans at 1.84.3.⁵⁰² What Archidamus gives there is a definition of Lacedaemonian εὐβουλία. They are εὐβουλοί, he says, because they were not brought up to think themselves smart enough to despise the laws, but were raised in a strict program to be too self-controlled to disobey them.⁵⁰³ This is the polar opposite of Pericles' Athenians who examine the laws to see if they meet the requirements they need to meet, if they are going to be legitimate laws. This contrast between Pericles and Archidamus is telling. Not only does it imply that Pericles is giving a definition of Athenian-style εὐβουλία over against the Spartan version, but it also clarifies what that εὐβουλία is: The critical analysis of the laws to make sure they reflect δίκη and αἰδώς. Protagorean εὐβουλία was just that. It examined proposed laws to see if they were consistent with the ethical tradition (δίκη and αἰδώς) of the particular community (see

⁵⁰⁰ For the synonymy of αἰδώς and αἰσχύνῃ in Thucydides, cf. 1.84.3.

⁵⁰¹ Caizzi 1999: 321 takes the similarity as evidence for the authenticity of the mythos in the *Protagoras*.

⁵⁰² Hussey 1985: 123-25.

⁵⁰³ Cf. Hdt. 7.104.4.

subsections 5.4.3, 5.4.4). In this way Pericles' description of Athenian law-abidingness recalls in language and concept Protagorean εὐβουλία.

And just as Protagoras considered δίκη and αἰδώς to be the consensus of the polis, so does Pericles. The fact alone that Pericles sanctions the critical analysis of the laws is proof enough that he refuses to regard them, as Archidamus' Spartans do, as anything transcendental. Archidamus' claim is based on theistic assumptions about the origin of the laws; Pericles' claim assumes their conventionality. This same idea is reflected in the word choice of κείνται which recalls the origin of the laws in human θέσις and in the important qualifier of αἰσχόνη ὁμολογουμένη. The Athenians consider that a law should be obeyed, if it is the product of agreement and if, in the case of a law that is cultural and not inscribed on a stêlē,⁵⁰⁴ the opprobrium that attaches to its disobedience is acknowledged and recognized by the Athenian people.⁵⁰⁵ Consensus is the authority and basis of the law for Pericles.

Pericles makes a very similar claim in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. Asked by the young Alcibiades what a law is, Pericles answers πάντες γὰρ οὗτοι νόμοι εἰσὶν, οὓς τὸ πλῆθος συνελθὼν καὶ δοκιμάσαν ἔγραψε, φράζον ἃ τε δεῖ ποιεῖν καὶ ἃ μὴ (1.2.42). The significance of this definition, though, has always been regarded as compromised by the fact that Pericles soon gives a rather undemocratic definition of law as πάντα ὅσα ἂν τὸ κρατοῦν τῆς πόλεως βουλευσάμενον, ἃ χρὴ ποιεῖν, γράψῃ, νόμος καλεῖται (1.2.43). However, since Pericles is compelled by Alcibiades' rapier logic (or so Xenophon thinks) to give this second definition (and several others, as the passage progresses), and since Alcibiades is able to entrap Pericles right after the first definition,⁵⁰⁶ only the first definition can be considered genuine Periclean material. As such

⁵⁰⁴ For this human, as opposed to divine, content of ἄγραφοι νόμοι, cf. Hornblower 1991: 302.

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. Ehrenberg 1954: 37-41.

⁵⁰⁶ Specifically, when Alcibiades asks, Πότερον δὲ τὰγαθὰ νομίσαν δεῖν ποιεῖν ἢ τὰ κακά; (1.2.42).

it tellingly reverberates with this passage in the funeral speech and confirms that for Pericles what makes law in Athens is θέσις and ὁμολογία on the part of the Athenian citizenry.

Finally, the overall structure of 2.37 gives reason to believe that Pericles implies in this passage that the Athenian consensus, that source and origin of Athenian law, is reached in genuine same-mindedness rather than in the begrudging acquiescence that persuasion produces. That structure is sequential and consequential. In the first sentence Pericles describes the Athenian government as it is characterized by freedom. Then, in case the point was missed, a τε-clause with an adverb (ἐλευθέρως) recalls and summarizes the point, while an ensuing καί introduces the next idea, Athenian friendship (φιλία). Then follows another τε-clause with an adverb (ἀνεπαχθῶς recalling ἀχθηδόνως) summarizing the idea of that sentence, while again a καί introduces the next topic, Athenian law. The implication of this conceptual anastrophe, so to speak, is that there is a cause-and-consequence relationship between the three sentences.⁵⁰⁷ Athenian political freedom makes possible that unforced friendship the Athenians enjoy and that same friendship in turn makes possible Athenian legislation by consensus. Ἐλευθερία produces φιλία and φιλία produces ὁμολογία. Thus the structure of 2.37 suggests that Pericles regards Athenian consensus to be a genuine consensus, arising out of their mutual affection and considerateness, not an impersonal contract.

This formula ἐλευθερία-φιλία-ὁμολογία duplicates the recipe that according to Protagoras brought about the formation of the first communities. The first humans, being individually self-sufficient and autonomous, were unable to accept the compromise necessary for the foundation of cities until by a time-consuming process of trial and error they found same-minded individuals and established communities in which they could live without compromising their personal assessments of reality. Their natures, hardwired for self-rule (ἐλευθερία), combined in affection

⁵⁰⁷ Cf. Smyth 2975.

(φιλία) with others to produce the first primitive constitutions (ὁμολογία). The structure in which Pericles frames Athenian political culture thus reflects the formula that Protagoras' first humans followed.

For this reason Pericles' conceptualization of Athens also carries the nuance that the modern Athenian state is in accordance with human nature and with the historical origin of civilization, a nuance that cannot but imply that any government established according to any other principles is a monstrous deviation from the "nature of things," as ugly as the Centaurs and as unnatural as the Amazons on the metopes of Athena's recently completed temple.⁵⁰⁸ On a very deep level the Athenian polity is, as Pericles says (2.37.1), an example (παράδειγμα).

9.4 ATHENIAN DECISION-MAKING

Upon finishing his description of the Athenian polity, Pericles turns to the recreation and commodities available in Athens (2.38). These drive away moroseness (τὸ λυπηρόν) from the Athenian character. He then moves to military matters (2.39) and makes the point that the Athenians do not have to drill everyday in order to be equal to any enemy. They are good soldiers despite their relaxed lifestyle (ἀνειμένως διαιτώμενοι). The reason is that they do not follow a manual (μετὰ νόμων) in being brave, but enjoy characters (τρόποι) that are intrinsically brave. This concludes two parts of Pericles' treatment of the Athenians' state, their πολιτεία and their τρόποι. He will now discuss their ἐπιτήδευσις. The first part of their "pursuits" is their attitude towards, and use of, money, which I discussed above (see subsection 9.2.2). He now broaches the subject of the way the Athenians make public decisions. He says (2.40.2):

⁵⁰⁸ Though dedicated in 438/7, work continued until 433/2 BC. Wycherley 1978: 114-15.

ἐνι τε τοῖς αὐτοῖς οἰκείων ἅμα καὶ πολιτικῶν ἐπιμέλεια, καὶ ἑτέροις <ἕτερα> πρὸς ἔργα τετραμμένοις τὰ πολιτικὰ μὴ ἐνδεῶς γινῶναι· μόνοι γὰρ τόν τε μηδὲν τῶνδε μετέχοντα οὐκ ἀπράγμονα, ἀλλ' ἀχρεῖον νομίζομεν, καὶ [οἱ] αὐτοὶ ἦτοι κρίνομέν γε ἢ ἐνθυμοῦμεθα ὀρθῶς τὰ πράγματα, οὐ τοῦ λόγου τοῖς ἔργοις βλάβην ἡγούμενοι, ἀλλὰ μὴ προδιδαχθῆναι μᾶλλον λόγῳ πρότερον ἢ ἐπὶ ᾧ δεῖ ἔργῳ ἐλθεῖν.

A few points of contention regarding the meaning of this passage must be discussed before a broader interpretation can be attempted.

9.4.1 Th. 2.40.2

The first is to whom τοῖς αὐτοῖς refers. For a long time it was taken to refer to all the Athenians generally, and since that leaves no group to which ἑτέροις can stand in contrast, it was concluded that Richard's solution was preferable.⁵⁰⁹ Quite some time later Lowell Edmunds challenged this view. His weightiest argument was that πρὸς ἔργα τρέπεσθαι is an idiom that signifies "to pay attention to one's own affairs" (sc. to the exclusion of any public affairs).⁵¹⁰ But from the passages he cites in support it is clear that the idiom only has that meaning *contextually* and that alone it is not enough to suggest that ἑτέροις introduces a distinct group. An adjective (e.g. ἴδια) is needed or the addition of the article τοῖς to ἑτέροις as Thucydides does at 3.73. Consequently, the traditional view that τοῖς αὐτοῖς refers to the "Athenians generally" remains preferable.

It is also unclear whether γινῶναι means know (*novisse*) or decide (*decernere*).⁵¹¹ Recent commentators give it the former meaning,⁵¹² but two considerations make this unlikely. First, though one cannot be dogmatic in such problems, still, if it meant "know," one might rather expect Thucydides to have used the present (or even perfect) tense, just as he does in the very

⁵⁰⁹ So Poppo-Stahl 1889 ad loc, Classen-Steup 1914 ad loc, Gomme 1956 ad loc. Richards 1893 19 suggested that it was a matter of haplography and that instead of substituting ἕτερα for ἑτέροις it should be added to it, citing Eur. *Alc.* 893 as an example for the construction.

⁵¹⁰ 1972: 172. Rusten 1985: 18 argues for Edmunds' interpretation, but his argument, *pace* Hornblower 1991 ad loc, adds little or no support. It is certainly true that τοῖς αὐτοῖς behaves here as the Latin *idem*, but that does not mean "the Athenians generally" are not meant.

⁵¹¹ Cf. Poppo-Stahl 1889 ad loc.

⁵¹² Rusten 1989: ad loc, Hornblower 1991 ad loc, but for a contrasting view see Parry 1981: 165-166.

next sentence (οἱ τὰ τε δεινὰ καὶ ἡδέα σαφέστατα γινώσκοντες). Secondly, if it means “decide,” then a very interesting parallel between this passage and another important passage comes to light. At 3.36.4 Thucydides explains how the Athenians voted to put to death all the adult male Mytileneans, then on the next day regretted the decision because they thought “a cruel and shocking decision had been decided” (ὥμὸν τὸ βούλευμα καὶ μέγα ἐγνώσθαι). Shortly thereafter Cleon reminds them in similar language that this decision was incontrovertibly made and sneers at the speaker who would attempt to maintain that what the city decreed was not decided (τὸ πάνυ δοκοῦν ἀνταποφῆναι ὡς οὐκ ἔγνωσται ἀγωνίσαιτ’ ἅν) (3.38.2). Thus the words ἐγνώσθαι and ἔγνωσται encapsulate the first, bad decision about Mytilene. Now, in view of the fact the rest of Cleon’s speech frequently looks back to the funeral oration, especially to 2.37 and 2.40,⁵¹³ it makes sense to see here another reference to γνῶναι and a calling into question of Pericles’ claim that the Athenians make good decisions. This correspondence then suggests γνῶναι here does in fact mean “decide.”

Consequently, what Pericles claims in this passage is that the management of house and state, although disparate and discreet provinces, belongs to the same people, the Athenians generally. He then subdivides the management of one’s house (οἰκεῖα) and asserts that, although they are engaged in different occupations, they nonetheless have the ability (ἔνι) to make satisfactory decisions (μὴ ἐνδεῶς γνῶναι). The reason is that they regard total participation in the deliberative process to be an absolute necessity; so much so that anybody who prefers to sit out renders himself inconsequential (ἀχρεῖος), as well as the fact that for them discussion is not a hindrance to reaching decisions, but a guarantee of correct decisions (ὀρθῶς). In this very dense sentence Pericles makes several significant assumptions about the Athenian deliberative process which are hard to account for unless one posits a Protagorean conceptual substratum.

⁵¹³ E.g. 3.37.2 looks to 2.37.2, 3.37.3 to 2.40.2-3, 3.37.4 likewise to 2.40.2. Cf. Gomme 1956: 299-302.

9.4.2 Protagorean Assumptions

Specifically, Pericles makes four claims about Athenian decision-making: (a) not only does everybody take part, but (b) everybody *must* take part; (c) their different occupations do not entail the loss of agreement; and (d) democratic discussion improves our military activity. All four of these claims reflect concerns and requirements that figure in Protagoras' rationalization of democratic decision-making.

Everybody, Pericles says, takes part in Athenian decision-making. There is a striking verbal echo here. In the *Protagoras*, when asked what it is he teaches, Protagoras describes his curriculum with the words (318e5-319a2):

τὸ δὲ μάθημά ἐστιν **εὐβουλία** περὶ τῶν **οἰκείων**, ὅπως ἂν ἄριστα τὴν αὐτοῦ οἰκίαν διοικοῖ, καὶ περὶ **τῶν τῆς πόλεως**, ὅπως τὰ τῆς πόλεως δυνατώτατος ἂν εἴη καὶ πράττειν καὶ λέγειν.

Pericles uses similar words (οἰκείων ἅμα καὶ πολιτικῶν ἐπιμέλεια) and moreover both passages treat wise political decisions (εὐβουλία for Protagoras; τὰ πολιτικὰ μὴ ἐνδεῶς γινῶναι for Pericles). For Pericles the Athenians demonstrate political sagacity in their concern for both private and state affairs – the very thing Protagoras teaches. Thus Pericles describes the Athenians as though they were all Protagoras' students. Related to this is the term of measure μὴ ἐνδεῶς, a litotes which recalls Pericles' concern in the proem not to speak deficiently (ἐνδεεστέρως), nor to be excessive (πλεονάζεσθαι), but to speak μετρίως (see subsection 8.1.1). The Athenians make decisions that “measure up,” because they make them in a Protagorean way.

However, Pericles goes a step further and makes the point that city-wide deliberation is not a choice, but a necessity. The word he uses to describe those who do not take part, ἀχρεῖος, is strong. Those who do not take part justify themselves with the label ἀπράγμων which with its

aristocratic undertones implies they are pursuing “better” things,⁵¹⁴ but Pericles in calling them ἄχρεῖοι, rejects the possibility of anybody’s being a private citizen. Everybody must take part in political decisions. Why does Pericles reject the private citizen? Hornblower suggests that 2.63.2-3 contains the answer.⁵¹⁵ But the fact of the matter is that there, although Pericles does use the word ἄπραγμον, the context, and so the meaning, is entirely different. Pericles is exhorting the Athenians not to abandon their policy of imperialism, and such an act of non-interference (ἄπραγμον) would prove dangerous to themselves. Here, however, he is referring to one who refuses to go to the Assembly. So, the reason why Pericles comes down so hard on the quietists remains unclear.

But a look at Protagoras’ teaching clarifies the problem. Just as Pericles, Protagoras took it as axiomatic that all the citizens must participate in the political decisions. Indeed, the point of the mythos he tells in the *Protagoras* is meant as an explanation as to why deliberation by all citizens is a commendable procedure (see section 5.1).⁵¹⁶ And again like Pericles he goes a step further and denies the rectitude of quietism when, as though summing up his mythos and logos he states τούτου τοῦ πράγματος, τῆς ἀρετῆς, εἰ μέλλει πόλις εἶναι, οὐδένα δεῖ ιδιωτεύειν (327a1-2). The ideal city cannot have an ιδιώτης. Again, Protagoras’ rejection of the private citizen approaches, or rather even goes beyond, the vehemence of Pericles’ ἄχρεῖος, when at the end of the mythos Zeus tells Hermes to establish the law among mortals that anybody who cannot share in δίκη and αἰδώς is to be killed as a “disease of the city”: καὶ νόμον γε θεὸς παρ’ ἐμοῦ τὸν μὴ δυνάμενον αἰδοῦς καὶ δίκης μετέχειν κτείνειν ὡς νόσον πόλεως (322c5-6). The reason why Protagoras rejects the ιδιώτης is, as discussed in chapter four, that for him δίκη and αἰδώς signify

⁵¹⁴ Cf. Connor 1971: 179-80; Dover 1974: 188; Brock 1991: 164.

⁵¹⁵ 1991: 305.

⁵¹⁶ Cf. 322d5-323a4, 323c3-5, 324c5-d1.

a city's morality (see section 4.4), and since a city's morality is the product of the citizens' agreement, they also signify the city's consensus (see subsection 5.1.3).

Therefore, when Protagoras says that the one who cannot share in δίκη and αἰδώς is a disease of the city, he is saying the same thing as Pericles: The quietist is the one who refuses to participate in decision-making and therefore has absolutely no place in the polis. This similar definition, given in similar language,⁵¹⁷ at a similar intensity of disapproval, suggests in turn that Pericles rejects the disconnected citizen for the same reason as Protagoras. Since morality is what the city's opinion determines it to be, it is imperative that everybody weigh in on all the political issues. There will never be a correct reading of the city's opinion unless all individual opinions are aired (see subsections 5.1.3, 6.2.4). This reasoning gives definition to Pericles' word choice. The citizen who withholds his individual opinion makes himself dead weight in the Athenian deliberative system. He is in the most literal sense of the word ἀχρεῖος.

Just because they are all engaged in the management of the city it does not mean that they have to sacrifice their individual pursuits and live in Spartan uniformity. They can remain "each engaged in different occupations" (ἐτέροις <ἕτερα> πρὸς ἔργα τετραμμένοις). And, what is more, in this plurality of occupations they succeed in making political decisions that "measure up" (τὰ πολιτικὰ μὴ ἐνδεῶς γινῶναι) which in a democratic assembly means reaching agreement (see subsection 9.3.2). Thus Pericles praises Athens for the fact that it reaches agreement without losing individual differences. The individual and the whole he belongs to are united in a combination that paradoxically obscures and preserves discrepancies. The Athenian deliberative branch respects the whole *and* its parts. There is conformity without uniformity.

⁵¹⁷ Pericles designates him as τὸν μηδὲν τῶνδε (i.e. τῶν πολιτικῶν) μετέχοντα, while Protagoras calls him τὸν μὴ δυνάμενον αἰδοῦς καὶ δίκης μετέχειν.

With its notion of balance and harmony of counter-intuitive traits the idea is in keeping with the passage as a whole where similarly the Athenians love what is fine without extravagance and cultivate what is intelligent without effeminacy (2.40.1). But, besides this stylistic congruity with its environment, Pericles' idea bears a similarity with Protagoras' ideas on human autarky. Since the beginning, according to the sophist, and in its essence the human animal is a self-sufficient and therefore solitary creature. The ideal human government will recognize this about human nature and respect it and at the same time succeed in reaching agreement in spite of it (see subsection 8.2.1 on Protagorean autarky). In a sense then democracy itself for Protagoras can be defined as the genuine agreement among same-minded, but fundamentally different, individuals; as the order that the polis-measure doctrine imparts to the apparently chaotic implications of the human-measure claim, without however violating that the human-measure claim (see section 5.1). Similarly, Pericles' picture of the Athenians as reaching agreement despite individual differences reflects Protagoras' definition of democracy at its most basic level, as a response to human nature.

Having underscored the all-inclusiveness of the Athenian deliberative process and pointed out along the way that it in no way impairs, but rather improves their decisions, Pericles restates⁵¹⁸ what he has just said in the phrase τὰ πολιτικά μὴ ἐνδεῶς γινῶναι with more specific phraseology: καὶ [οἱ] αὐτοὶ ἤτοι κρίνομέν γε ἢ ἐνθυμοῦμεθα ὀρθῶς τὰ πράγματα. "And we ourselves," he says, "either judge state affairs, as is more often the case, or devise them correctly," thereby reflecting the two functions any Athenian citizen might fulfill on the Pnyx,

⁵¹⁸ This restatement is another reason why Edmunds 1972: 172 argues against Richard's emendation, feeling that it "reduces this clause to a rhetorically ineffective repetition of the preceding one." But Pericles is giving further, almost adulatory, definition to τὰ πολιτικά μὴ ἐνδεῶς γινῶναι – that is, the hallmark of the Athenian democracy, a thing that is quite rhetorically effective.

that of voter or proposer.⁵¹⁹ Then, having thus summarized and rephrased himself, he introduces the reasons for following such a democratic procedure in a participial clause:

οὐ τοὺς λόγους τοῖς ἔργοις βλάβην ἡγούμενοι, ἀλλὰ μὴ προδιδαχθῆναι μᾶλλον λόγῳ πρότερον ἢ ἐπὶ ᾧ δεῖ ἔργῳ ἐλθεῖν. Διαφερόντως γὰρ δὴ καὶ τότε ἔχομεν ὥστε τολμᾶν τε οἱ αὐτοὶ μάλιστα καὶ περὶ ὧν ἐπιχειρήσομεν ἐκλογίζεσθαι.

One reason they submit all state questions to democratic discussion is because they think it is not harmful to their actions. One might think, and a conservative-minded Greek would think, that submitting a question for debate to the unlettered mob would be a recipe for disaster. But Pericles disagrees. Democratic discussion and decision-making is beneficial, he says. Protagoras makes the same point in the *Protagoras* when in the flautist analogy he tells Socrates that in the city of flautists the citizens instruct (διδάσκειν) each other and correct whoever plays amiss because their sense of justice and virtue benefits each other (λυσιτελεῖ γὰρ οἶμαι ἡμῖν ἢ ἀλλήλων δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἀρετή) (327b1-2). Everybody participates in decision-making, and the speeches anybody can make in the Assembly in response to the call τίς ἀγορεύειν βούλεται are a beneficial thing, not, as some would think, a detriment to action (βλάβη).

But why is it beneficial? It is because, Pericles explains, not to get instruction from democratic discussion beforehand (προδιδαχθῆναι) is a recipe for military failure. However, since the Athenians do get such instruction, they prove in the event bold, yet at the same time calculative, soldiers. And this counter-intuitive combination of daring and circumspection makes for the perfect soldier. At least it is rare (those who have the one trait are usually bereft of the other) and embodies the essence of bravery. For, in a definition that has a strong sophistic

⁵¹⁹ For this general interpretation, cf. Classen 1863 ad loc. Steup's objection (Classen-Steup 1914 ad loc) that ἤτοι cannot here indicate something more important (etwas Wichtigeres) is certainly true, and Pericles is merely clarifying that in Athenian decision-making, while there are more who judge than there are who propose (necessarily), the decision belongs to them all – an idea Pericles often stresses (cf. Th. 1.140.1, 2.64.1). However, Edmund's translation (1972: 171), endorsed by Rusten 1989 ad loc: "we at least judge policy correctly even if we do not formulate it" makes too much of the disjunctive conjunction and carries "elitist" implications (cf. Hornblower 1991 ad loc) that, as I have tried to show, are not present either here or in 2.37.

flavor,⁵²⁰ Pericles says that those who (as themselves) know what is fearful and pleasant yet encounter what is fearful anyway are truly brave (2.40.3). The Athenian military is a force to be reckoned with precisely because their decision-making procedure is a democratic one that operates on a basis of consensus (cf. subsection 9.3.2).⁵²¹ No wonder they do not have to train all the time as the Spartans do (2.39.1). The mere fact that they reach their decisions democratically and do only what the consensus dictates guarantees success in their military endeavors.

This counter-intuitive idea closely reflects Protagoras' mythos. The first humans kept falling prey to the wild beasts because they could not succeed in living together. The reason, Protagoras explains, is that the science of war (ἡ πολεμική) is a part of the science of living together (ἡ πολιτική τέχνη) (322b5). Without knowing how to live together, the humans could never find protection from the animals. In time, however, they were able to live together, but only because they were lucky enough to come upon same-minded individuals with whom they could cohabit in a compromise-free, primitively democratic society (see subsections 4.2.2, 4.3.4). Thus, just as Protagoras points to their commonality of outlook as that which saved humankind in their wars with the beasts, so now Pericles claims that Athenian democratic consensus benefits them in all their military endeavors by rendering them, effortlessly, automatically, excellent soldiers. Herodotus (5.78) makes a similar point when he says that after gaining their freedom (ἰσηγορίῃ) from the tyrants (sic) the Athenians became first-rate soldiers. But once again what he says is subtly different from what Pericles says (cf. subsection 8.3.3). Herodotus' explanation is from the perspective of self-interest. Once freed the Athenians fought better because they no

⁵²⁰ Antiphon is recorded to have defined σωφροσύνη (DK 87 B59): ὅστις δὲ τῶν αἰσχροῶν ἢ τῶν κακῶν μήτε ἐπεθύμησε μήτε ἤψατο, οὐκ ἔστι σώφρων· οὐ γὰρ ἔσθ' ὅτου κρατήσας αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸν κόσμιον παρέχεται. Thus for Antiphon, as for Pericles, knowledge makes the difference. Socrates of course gives the same definition of bravery in *Protagoras* (360d4-6), but the value he places in this definition is not the idea itself that true bravery requires knowledge, but that, since bravery requires knowledge, the virtues must be a unity.

⁵²¹ See Parry 1981: 166 for a similar reading.

longer worked (ἐργαζόμενοι) for a master, but were eager to work an achievement (κατεργάζεσθαι) for themselves. The author of the Hippocratic *On Airs, Waters and Places* shares Herodotus' perspective (23). Pericles on the other hand claims that the Athenians are better soldiers because their democratic mode of decision-making, aiming as it does at consensus, affords them the necessary advance-instruction. The Athenians' secret weapon then is their consensus-based politics. Without it they are nothing; with it they are unstoppable, because it means they enjoy a same-mindedness, or ὁμόνοια.⁵²² While this ὁμόνοια does allow them individuality and unlike the Spartans they are free to pursue the lifestyle and occupation of their choice (cf. 2.37.2, 2.40.2), there is still presupposed a commonality of thought and outlook accompanying the more superficial diversity. On the frieze running around Athena's *cella* where cavalrymen, elders, musicians, water-jar bearers, tray-bearers, and banqueters, though engaged in different tasks, wearing different clothes and striking different poses, are still alike in their faces.⁵²³ Pericles' soldier-citizens are depicted from a very similar perspective.

9.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have discussed the ways in which I suggest the constitutional portion of Pericles' funeral speech describes the Athenian political culture from a perspective that in language, structure and concept reflects Protagorean political thought. First, treating 2.37.1 I argued that the way Pericles locates power in the Athenian people themselves and then proceeds to characterize the executive branch as an aristocracy of virtue reflects Protagorean ideas about the

⁵²² The absence of consensus is the very thing Pericles points to as the greatest disadvantage of the Peloponnesians (Th. 1.141.6).

⁵²³ Cited in Osborne 2010: 299-300. Similarly, Osborne 2010: 301-302 sees a correspondence between the Parthenon frieze and Pericles' funeral speech (301) and the egalitarianism of the Athenian democracy (302).

importance of consensus, the role of democratic leaders, the political ability of the ordinary citizen, the factor of natural endowment and the proper function of money in the ideal state. I then discussed 2.37.2-3 and attempted to show that what Pericles says about the Athenians' behavior towards each other and their attitude towards the laws, both written and unwritten, presents Athens as a re-enactment and re-creation of Protagoras' first successful human community. Finally, I turned to 2.40 and offered an interpretation of Pericles' presentation of the Athenian deliberative process: It is the secret of their – and any democracy's – success inasmuch as it creates and preserves conformity without imposing uniformity. In several of these features it becomes clear that Pericles means to depict Athens as a true paradox, a political and culture oxymoron. This paradoxical character simply goes to underscore and reinforce the celebratory idea already inherent in these characterizations of leadership, interaction and decision-making that Pericles gives of the city: That human political, intellectual and ethical culture has reached a high-water mark in Athens.

10.0 PROTAGOREAN RHETORIC: A RECIPE FOR *HOMONOIA*

In the past forty years there have been efforts to reassess ancient sophistic rhetoric from new perspectives.⁵²⁴ While the reassessment of every sophist offers a great many new insights, the rhetoric of Protagoras of Abdera in particular deserves special attention. Not only is he usually considered the first sophist,⁵²⁵ and according to Plato the first to bear the title proudly,⁵²⁶ but his teaching became synonymous with sophistic education for both his, and the following, generation. The heart of his rhetorical teaching was his claim to know how “to make the weaker case stronger” (τὸν ἥττω λόγον κρείττω ποιεῖν).⁵²⁷ Besides being the motto of the Sophists’ Academy in Aristophanes’ *Clouds*, this claim was also one of the charges included in the accusation against Socrates in 399 BC.⁵²⁸ Originally, however, it was the brainchild of Protagoras. Since what he taught thus became representative of the whole class of sophists (as well as those accused of sophistry), it is particularly important to understand what this claim meant.

I intend to argue that this claim should be understood in the context of Protagoras’s so-called human-measure doctrine. In chapters two to six I have argued that the human-measure doctrine, amounting to a relativism which maintained that the individual’s assessment of reality was veridical and incorrigible (section 2.1), had a political application in favor of democracy

⁵²⁴ See Schiappa 2003: 64-85 for a summary of recent scholarship on sophistic rhetoric.

⁵²⁵ Guthrie 1971: 263; Kerferd 1981: 42.

⁵²⁶ *Prt.* 317b3-4.

⁵²⁷ Arist. *Rh.* 1402a23 (= DK 80 B6b).

⁵²⁸ Ar. *Nub.* 889-1130; Pl. *Ap.* 19b5.

(section 5.1). This political application entailed the premise that government and morality work according to rules which, while they do not represent a *global* obligation on the individual's conscience, do represent a *local* obligation on it, inasmuch as they issue from an agreement of the community which was not deliberately enacted, as ancient social contract theories typically postulate (subsection 4.3.3), but genuinely and spontaneously emanated from the community (subsections 4.3.4, 5.1.2). However, a community that operates on the basis of genuine agreement still needs, Protagoras argued, leaders, and in chapter six I examined how Protagoras could have construed a role for leaders in such a community without introducing an inconsistency with his relativism (section 6.2). These leaders are to be advocates of the city's actual opinion, not just committed by Protagorean ethics to a democratic government, but in fact constrained by his ethics to one, since what the city decides is the closest approximation in human ethics to a collective morality (subsection 5.1.2).

In this chapter I intend to discuss just how such leaders were supposed to advocate for the city's opinion. Specifically, I will argue that Protagoras' claim of being able to make the weaker logos stronger amounts to a rhetorical program designed to create and preserve that very consensus of opinion and harmony among the citizenry which were so integral to Protagoras' ethical and political teachings. According to this program, the orator is to reduce all possible opinions on a question or course of action to two: the consensus view and the dissension view. Then, he is to advocate for the consensus view, not by overt argumentation, but instead by implicit techniques of praise and censure of the ideas and attitudes, prejudices and biases that stand in the way of sincere unanimity. If he is successful, the result will be true agreement and stabilizing harmony. Thus, according to Protagoras' assumptions, rhetoric is indissolubly bonded with politics.

10.1 RELATIVISM AND RHETORIC

There have been several attempts to understand Protagoras's rhetorical teachings in the larger context of his philosophy, but in the last analysis these attempts prove inconsistent with a strict relativist position. For instance, A. T. Cole interpreted Protagoras's claim to make the weaker case stronger as a claim to substitute what was, in the view of the person to be persuaded, upsetting with what was, again in the view of the person to be persuaded, more pleasing.⁵²⁹ However, this is simply an (albeit) mild hedonistic calculus which ultimately makes ἡδονή and λύπη (pleasure and pain) the criteria of values, not the individual. More recently, E. Schiappa interpreted the claim in the light of a Heracliteo-Protagorean philosophy, but he too, in his characterization of the weaker and stronger case as a preferred and less preferable case, stands at odds with a relativist position.⁵³⁰

10.1.1 Rhetorical Implications of Relativism

As discussed above (subsection 2.1.1), Protagoras' relativism was expressed in the claim, as recorded by Plato: φησὶ γάρ που πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἄνθρωπον εἶναι, τῶν μὲν ὄντων ὥς ἔστι, τῶν δὲ μὴ ὄντων ὥς οὐκ ἔστιν. In other words, whatever an individual perceives to be the case, is the case for that individual. To use Plato's illustration of the wind: If the same wind appears to one person to be cool, to another cold, to another warm and to yet another positively hot, Protagoras's dictum constrains one to say that the wind is in fact cool to the one who feels it to be cool, cold to the one who feels it to be cold, and so forth (*Tht.* 152b). This being the case, it follows that on any given thing there will be a multitude of perceptions. How did Protagoras

⁵²⁹ 1972: 34.

⁵³⁰ 2003: 103-16. I discuss Schiappa's view below.

handle these countless perceptions? As I suggest in chapter five (subsection 5.3.2; cf. subsection 6.3.1), environmental conditioning will guarantee that on many occasions, if not on most, the members of the same community will have the same worldview and so share perceptions and judgments. Still, seeing that an individual's natural endowment varies and that levels of education vary (cf. subsections 5.4.2 & 5.4.3), it is only to be expected that there will be occasions when the community members disagree. How is this disagreement between equally veridical positions reconcilable?

The first step towards reconciling discrepant perceptions is suggested by Kerferd's connecting fragment DK 80 B6a (= D. L. 9.51) to this plurality of perceptions. The first step towards reconciling discrepant perceptions is suggested by Kerferd's connecting fragment DK 80 B6a (= D. L. 9.51) to this plurality of perceptions.⁵³¹ The fragment reads: δύο λόγους εἶναι περὶ παντὸς πράγματος ἀντικειμένους ἀλλήλοις ("that concerning each thing there are two accounts opposed to each other"). For a long time scholars followed the interpretation of Clement of Alexandria and Seneca in construing this "two-logoi" fragment as solely rhetorical in scope, and articulating the practice of arguing both sides of a case (*in utramque partem disputare*).⁵³² Protagoras might very well have taught this technique. However, to interpret the fragment in this way results in a solely rhetorical formulation and so fails to account for the philosophical dimension of the statement. For, not only is it articulated as a theoretical principle, but Diogenes records it in the context of Protagoras's philosophical teachings.⁵³³ Therefore, Kerferd's connection of this fragment with the human-measure dictum is sound reasoning. So, connecting the two fragments, one understands how Protagoras made sense of a multitude of

⁵³¹ 1981: 90.

⁵³² Clem. Al. *Strom.* 6. 65, Sen. *Ep.* 88. 43. For the traditional interpretation, see Kennedy 1963: 31. See Schiappa 2003: 89-91 for a summary of traditional interpretations and translations.

⁵³³ Diog. Laert. 9.51.

perceptions. They can always be reduced to two primary perceptions, opposite to each other: X and not-X. The wind is either hot or not-hot.

10.1.2 The “Better” Logos

Neither of these perceptions is truer than the other, though one of them is better. As Protagoras says (Pl. *Tht.* 166e1-167a5):

οἷον γὰρ ἐν τοῖς πρόσθεν ἐλέγετο ἀναμνήσθητι, ὅτι τῷ μὲν ἀσθενοῦντι πικρὰ φαίνεται ἃ ἐσθίει καὶ ἔστι, τῷ δὲ ὑγιαίνοντι τάναντία ἔστι καὶ φαίνεται. Σοφώτερον μὲν οὖν τούτων οὐδέτερον δεῖ ποιῆσαι –οὐδὲ γὰρ δυνατόν–οὐδὲ κατηγορητέον ὥς ὁ μὲν κάμων ἀμαθὴς ὅτι τοιαῦτα δοξάζει, ὁ δὲ ὑγιαίνων σοφὸς ὅτι ἄλλοῖα, μεταβλητέον δ’ ἐπὶ θάτερα· ἀμείνων γὰρ ἢ ἑτέρα ἔξις. οὕτω δὲ καὶ ἐν τῇ παιδείᾳ ἀπὸ ἑτέρας ἕξεως ἐπὶ τὴν ἀμείνω μεταβλητέον·

In this passage Protagoras begins at the stage where all possible perceptions on a single thing (πρᾶγμα) have been reduced to two: bitter and sweet. The reason why each man has his perception is because he is in a certain state, or disposition (ἔξις).⁵³⁴ Neither disposition is impaired in ascertaining reality. Therefore, both dispositions are equally valid. However, Protagoras likens one disposition to being healthy, the other to being ill. Also, as the disposition, so the perception. Protagoras goes on to say that each disposition generates perceptions that correspond to the disposition (167b1-2). Therefore, to continue his metaphor, a sick man generates sick perceptions, and a healthy man healthy ones (cf. subsection 6.1.2).

But the metaphor can be pressed too far. To call something sick implies that it is somehow defective. Yet Protagoras is clear that both perceptions are true. Therefore, each disposition is valid in and of itself, and the perceptions it generates are legitimate assessments of reality. However, Protagoras clearly says that one of his two sample dispositions, and so one of the perceptions, is better (ἀμείνων, βελτίων). How can that be? What does Protagoras mean by

⁵³⁴ For the translation of ἔξις as disposition, cf. [Pl.] *Def.* 414c8: ἔξις διάθεσις ψυχῆς καθ’ ἣν ποιοῖ τινες λεγόμεθα (“hexis: disposition of the soul whereby we are said to be a certain way”).

“better”? Kerferd argues that he meant by the “better” perception that which has more beneficial consequences. The sick man, who needs to eat food that will render him healthy, yet refuses because it is distasteful to him, must be drawn into a new state in which he will perceive the tastiness of the food. That new state will be better, because it is advantageous to his life.⁵³⁵

However, this interpretation is solely based on the metaphor and ignores Protagoras’s explanation of that metaphor. He makes it clear that neither disposition is defective. Both men, the sick as well as the healthy, perceive a legitimate truth. But if, as Kerferd maintains, one truth is objectively more advantageous, then an objective criterion has just been introduced, namely utility, and Gregory Vlastos is right when he points out that such an interpretation would not be in keeping with Protagoras’s relativism (cf. subsection 6.3.1).⁵³⁶ Moreover, the view that the “better perception” is the perception that has more beneficial consequences ultimately derives from Socrates’ *interpretation* of Protagoras’s words,⁵³⁷ and, as A. T. Cole has shown, there is good reason to suspect that there is more Plato than Protagoras in that view.⁵³⁸

A better interpretation, if somewhat older, is A. E. Taylor’s. He suggested for Protagoras the “better perception” was “that which agrees with the perception and thought of your ‘social environment.’”⁵³⁹ This view amounts to pragmatism. One’s perceptions must agree with his social environment, not because the perceptions of one’s peers are superior assessments of reality, but because community is impossible without agreement. “The practical urgencies of life require that my private world and your private world should not be very dissimilar.”⁵⁴⁰ Thus “the ‘common’ world is strictly the *creation* of the ‘intersubjective intercourse’ on which all practical

⁵³⁵ 1949: 25; 1967: 91-93. Farrar 1988: 74-75 follows Kerferd in her interpretation of this passage.

⁵³⁶ 1956: xxiin47.

⁵³⁷ See Pl. *Tht.* 172a1b2, 177d2-6.

⁵³⁸ Cole 1966: 112-16.

⁵³⁹ 1926: 332-33.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 333. The “Anonymus Iamblichi” (DK 89, p. 402, vv. 21-30) reflects a similar pragmatism, which amounts to a social contract theory which the author curiously tries to base on nature. For the ancient understanding of the social contract as issuing from the deliberate agreement of the parties involved, see Kahn 1981: 93, 99.

co-operation depends.”⁵⁴¹ Vlastos appears to follow Taylor when he defines what Protagoras means by the wise man: “The wise man has power to change men so that the result appears good to them;” he wields power over others “to secure for them what they themselves feel to be good.”⁵⁴² In other words, Vlastos interprets the better perception as that which is better *in the opinion of the perceivers*. This interpretation is entertained most recently by Timothy Chappell.⁵⁴³

Taylor’s idea of consistency with community opinion has been criticized for this pragmatic element on the grounds that as such it is inconsistent with a relativist position, inasmuch as it makes the practical needs of the community the rule for political behavior.⁵⁴⁴ Indeed, as Taylor construes it, this criticism is well grounded. If citizens agree to compromise any of their genuinely held opinions so that the community will not be jeopardized, then the advantage of the group becomes the basis for moral behavior. This is merely political utility, essentially no different than Kerferd’s biological utility. The doctrine of consistency then would appear to present a problem to Protagorean relativism. However, according to my interpretation of Protagoras’ political thinking, the formulation of the origin of human society which Protagoras presents in Plato’s *Protagoras* (320c8-328d2) circumvents this problem. Individuals came together in community *accidentally*. Those who had similar outlooks fortuitously met and because of their similarity of thought were able to abide together (subsection 4.3.4). The most important consequence of this accidental cohabitation is that individual opinion is both historically and (ideally at least) politically identical with the opinion of the whole community.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.* 333.

⁵⁴² 1956: xxi-xxii.

⁵⁴³ 2004: 112.

⁵⁴⁴ Burnyeat 1990: 23-24.

Consensus is correct, not for pragmatic reasons, but because it represents a local reality which as such is authoritative and sovereign (subsection 5.1.3).

Even aside from the question of pragmatism in Protagoras's formulation of human society, the idea of consistency as the principle criterion in human ethics makes good sense of Protagoras's metaphor. To use Plato's example, an individual tastes wine.⁵⁴⁵ It tastes bitter to him. He is not wrong. His perception is a true (for him) perception and reflects a true (for him) quality of the wine. Yet, Protagoras calls him "sick," admits that he needs to be changed and that the opposite opinion (i.e. that wine tastes good) is the better opinion, because the consensus opinion on the taste of wine in fifth-century Athens is that it tastes good. The one to whom it tastes, and is, bitter, is "sick" in the sense that his tastes are at variance with the consensus opinion which is "healthy" because it is, so to speak, the norm. If he lived in an environment where most people considered wine to be bitter, then the bitterness of wine would be the healthy, consensus view. That human norms and behavior differed depending on the environment was an idea that was the object of intense interest and research during Protagoras' lifetime.⁵⁴⁶

Consistency as the criterion in human ethics is also reflected in Protagoras's remarks on punishment in the *Protagoras*. There Zeus instructs Hermes on how to distribute δίκη and αἰδώς (justice and shame) to mankind (*Prt.* 322d3-6). He is to distribute them equally, and any who cannot share in them is to be killed as a "disease of the city" (ὥς νόσον πόλεως). Protagoras soon modifies the same idea: He who cannot share in δίκη and αἰδώς, whether male, female or child needs to be instructed through "punishment." If punishment proves ineffective, he is to be killed

⁵⁴⁵ The example is Socrates' (*Pl. Tht.* 159c11ff.) which Protagoras has in mind when he introduces the metaphor (166e).

⁵⁴⁶ The *Histories* of Herodotus are a prime example of this interest and research. For the relationship between such ethnography and theories of relativism, see Keyt and Miller 2004: 306 and Guthrie 1971: 16-17. The influence that environment has on human character, intellect and physique figures in the fifth-century Hippocratic treatise *Airs, Waters and Places* (ch. 12).

(325a2-b1). Lastly, there is a third instance pertaining only to office-holders: He who breaks the law while in office is to be “straightened” in examinations (εὐθυναί) (326d6-e2). From these three passages it becomes clear that Protagoras regarded disobedience to the law to be the same as inability to live by δίκη and αἰδώς. However, δίκη and αἰδώς are nothing more than a given city’s moral and legal tradition, the result of convention and in no way transcendental or reflective of a natural law.⁵⁴⁷ The individual who fails to abide by the standards of the community is described as sick (or “diseased”) and is to be brought into conformity with them. As in the *Theaetetus* passage quoted above, sickness in the *Protagoras* simply means being out of step with one’s ethical and legal environment.

10.1.3 Conclusion

In sum, the two-logoi fragment explains how Protagoras reduced a multitude of perceptions to two, while *Theaetetus* 166e1-167a5 shows that between these two logoi one is better in the sense that it is in greater conformity with the consensus. In other words, all perceptions reduce to two, X and not-X. These two perceptions, when articulated, become two logoi, or views. Of these two logoi, the one is better (ἀμείνων, βελτίων) and the other is worse (χείρων).⁵⁴⁸ Or, to put it metaphorically, the one is healthy and the other is sick. This equation of the two logoi with the two perceptions, and all it implies, has an important implication on Protagoras’s most famous, or infamous, educational claim.

⁵⁴⁷ For the conventional or non-natural status of morality in Protagoras’s myth, cf. Taylor 1926: 244; Guthrie 1971: 136-37; Kerferd 1981: 143-44; Döring 1981: 110-11; Müller 1986: 183; Balot 2006: 76.

⁵⁴⁸ This is my conjecture, as what word Protagoras used to characterize the opposite of ἀμείνων simply does not occur. This may be an accident or Protagoras might very well have been reluctant to call the view opposite to the “better” explicitly “the worse.”

10.2 THE WEAKER LOGOS AND THE STRONGER

Protagoras professed to be able to “make the weaker case stronger” (τὸν ἥττω λόγον κρείττω ποιεῖν).⁵⁴⁹ Traditionally, this has been understood pejoratively: Protagoras taught one how to make a legal case that was clearly false win out over the case that was really true.⁵⁵⁰ However, the discussion of the *Theaetetus* passage above suggests that the weaker and stronger logoi are actually the same as the two perceptions to which all perceptions on a given subject are reducible. Not only do both doctrines define a situation in terms of opposites, but just as one λόγος is stronger (κρείττων) than its opposite, so one φάντασμα is better (ἀμείνων, βελτίων) than its opposite.⁵⁵¹ This being the case, “to make the weaker logos stronger” will denote that very act of transforming the dissent view so that it accords with the consensus. Protagoras is claiming that he can make dissenters see eye to eye with the majority.

The traditional translation of the statement, though, which for clarity’s sake I have been using (namely, to make the weaker logos stronger) fails to capture this idea of *transforming* the weaker logos *into* the pre-existing stronger logos, but instead connotes a strengthening of a weaker logos (by unstated means). The reason for this translation is that ordinarily “stronger” (κρείττω) has been taken as a predicate adjective, but it can just as well be a predicate substantive, since in both cases the Greek omits the article.⁵⁵² So, taking “stronger” (κρείττω) as in this way, one can translate τὸν ἥττω λόγον κρείττω ποιεῖν “to make the weaker logos *the* stronger logos.” In other words, Protagoras is saying that he can take the view, called weaker

⁵⁴⁹ Arist. *Rh.* 1402a23 (= DK 80 B6b).

⁵⁵⁰ See Schiappa 2003: 104-7 for a summary of the pejorative interpretations.

⁵⁵¹ For the near synonymy of κρείττων, βελτίων, ἀμείνων, cf. Pl. *Grg.* 489e2-8, where Socrates tries to understand what Callicles means by the “better” person. One should note that H. Gomperz 1912: 269 suggested a similar equation between the better and worse dispositions in the *Theaetetus* passage and the stronger and weaker logoi. It hardly creates a problem that Protagoras calls λόγος what Plato will later *interpret* with the words ἔξις, φάντασμα, δόξα, since during Protagoras’s life philosophical terminology was still under-developed and, at any rate, λόγος for stated view or proposition was acceptable at any period (LSJ s.v. III.1-5).

⁵⁵² KG i. 592 (§461.1, Anmerkung 4).

because it is inconsistent with the consensus view, and make it *be what* the consensus view is. He can transform the person who thinks wine is bitter into a person who thinks it tastes good, and thus bring him into line with the view on wine that prevails at a given time and place.

This translation and understanding of Protagoras's most well-known rhetorical claim has the advantage over other positive interpretations in that it preserves Protagoras's relativism. For example, Edward Schiappa recently offered a positive interpretation of the fragment. Connecting it with the Heraclitean doctrine of change as an interchange between opposites, he explains that to make the weaker logos stronger means to make a less dominant, but preferable, logos more dominant.⁵⁵³ It is an interesting interpretation, but it assumes Protagoras's rhetorical teachings were divorced from his philosophical doctrine, since there must be some objective criterion by which a logos can be judged as preferable. More importantly, though, by persisting in the model of an interchange between opposites, Schiappa relies on a paradigm of substitution of one logos for another, although the idea of transformation of one view *into* another not only lies at the heart of the *Theaetetus* passage, as I have shown, but is integral to the parody of the weaker and stronger logoi in Aristophanes' *Clouds*.

10.3 THE DEBATE IN THE ARISTOPHANES' *CLOUDS*

Though the debate between Stronger Logos and Weaker Logos in the *Clouds* is a parody, it still preserves, as I will argue, a good deal of the original purpose to which Protagoras's rhetorical procedure was put. At first glance the debate appears to be between morality and an amoral hedonism, as indeed it has been taken; or (on better grounds) between two pedagogical

⁵⁵³ 2003: 113.

approaches.⁵⁵⁴ While these are undoubtedly themes in the *agon*, closer inspection suggests that the idea of a harmonious reconciliation between two conflicting ethicalities is the conceptual backbone of the contest.

10.3.1 Stronger Logos

It is virtually impossible to equate Stronger Logos with any sort of transcendental justice. As Dover has shown, though Weaker Logos is sometimes *described* as unjust (116, 657, 885), Stronger Logos is never named δίκαιος, and the play itself knows them both under the Protagorean names Κρείττων and ἤττων.⁵⁵⁵ Although in a single passage Stronger Logos says he will defeat Weaker Logos by saying what is just (900), the idea of justice treated there is facile and jejune. All Stronger Logos has to say about her⁵⁵⁶ is that she dwells with the gods (904). Even granted that the typical fifth-century Athenian still conceptualized justice as Hesiod did,⁵⁵⁷ he certainly had more interesting things to say about it. In the *Republic*, Cephalus, the picture of piety, sums up justice as telling the truth and giving the gods their sacrifices and men their appropriate deserts (331b1-5). Stronger Logos, on the other hand, fails to mention any such meaningful qualities. But, after all, it's precisely this puerile conception of justice that allows Weaker Logos to ridicule the mythological tradition. Stronger Logos is the butt of a joke, a *temporis acti laudator* and τυρογέπων (908) who, along with Strepsiades, is a caricature of traditional beliefs, not a symbol of true justice victimized by Weaker Logos.⁵⁵⁸

Stronger Logos's version of morality is just as diluted as his notion of justice. If he were any transcendental morality, he would not be, along with Weaker Logos, the friend of the Clouds

⁵⁵⁴ For the moral interpretation, see, e.g., Lesky 1963: 433. See Dover 1968: lviii-lxvi for the education aspect.

⁵⁵⁵ Dover 1968: lvii-lviii, Sommerstein 1982: 165-66.

⁵⁵⁶ See Dover 1968: 211 for reasons for taking justice here to be personified.

⁵⁵⁷ See, e.g., Hes. *Op.* 256-62.

⁵⁵⁸ For the caricature of traditional religion in the *Clouds*, see Marianetti 1992: 18-40.

(957) nor reside with the sophists in their *phrontisterion*, where all the residents are considered wicked, pale, barefoot poseurs (102-04). Furthermore, in the debate itself the curriculum he advocates is one that inculcates, not any ethical goodness, but only accepted behaviors (ἥθεσι χρηστοῖς) (959).⁵⁵⁹ He teaches orderly behavior (961-66), decent musical tunes (967-71), modesty (972-80) and respect for elders (981-83). Similarly, he faults Weaker Logos for teaching delicate living (985-89), idleness (991), disrespect of elders (993), vexing one's parents (994), sullyng one's reputation with a low brand of prostitute (996-97) and sassing one's father (998-99). Instead of teaching him to be a low-class wrangler in the law-courts, Stronger Logos will train him to be a strong, beautiful youth in the gardens of Academus (1002-1019). Finally, he warns the young Pheidippides that Weaker Logos will teach him to equate what is shameful with what is honorable (1020-1023). This last admonition sums up what Stronger Logos is all about: He is but a tradition of behavior, obsessed with modesty and self-control, which has a claim to being *the Athenian tradition* because of its role in the city's history (959, 986, 1028-9). He is the guardian of "the statue of Shame" (τῆς Αἰδοῦς...τᾶγαλμα) (995) in the city of Athens.

Stronger Logos's role is thus advocate of two goddesses, Δίκη and Αἰδώς (Justice and Shame), whose names recall the formulation of human society Protagoras gives in the *Protagoras* (see above, p. 8-9). But more important than the names is the substance. In both the *Clouds* and the *Protagoras*, Δίκη and Αἰδώς stand for one ethical environment, not ethics full stop. Thus the Protagorean definition of the stronger view (ὁ κρείττων λόγος) as the consensus of the individuals' perceptions/judgments in a given time and place shines through the Aristophanic parody. Stronger Logos is just as much a construct of human opinion as Weaker Logos.

⁵⁵⁹ See Dover 1974: 50-3, 58, 60-4 for the broad moral signification of χρηστός.

This downgraded status of Stronger Logos explains why Strepsiades wants his son to learn both Logoi (882-85). They're a package-deal. It also explains why, on both occasions when Strepsiades mentions Stronger Logos, he adds "whatever it is" (ὅστις ἐστί) (113, 883). Because Stronger Logos is just the moral tradition of a given environment, it is subject to change, depending on whether Protagoras was teaching in a democratic polis, an oligarchic polis or a monarchy. Be that as it may, Strepsiades clearly leans in preference towards Weaker Logos. This logos he particularly wants his son to learn because the arguments it makes are "more unjust" (ἀδικώτερα) (115). Dover dismisses the comparative adjective as a common turn and offers parallels in νεώτερος and πρεσβύτερος.⁵⁶⁰ However, besides the fact that in any language expressions of age easily slip into the comparative degree, the discussion above suggests that Strepsiades means exactly what he says: Both Stronger Logos and Weaker Logos reside in the Sophists' Academy and so are both thereby compromised; the teachings of Weaker Logos are clearly more unjust than the teachings of Stronger Logos, but even Stronger Logos's teachings fall short of a legitimate morality. Stronger Logos is but Athens' moral tradition, called in *Clouds* and *Protagoras* alike, Δίκη and Αἰδώς (Justice and Shame).

10.3.2 Weaker Logos

This interpretation of Stronger Logos explains the way Weaker Logos sees himself. When it comes his turn to speak, he expressly identifies himself, not as any "natural morality," though he clearly favors that ethical code,⁵⁶¹ but as merely the challenger of the moral *status quo* (1038-40):

ἐγὼ γὰρ ἥττων μὲν λόγος δι' αὐτὸ τοῦτ' ἐκλήθην

⁵⁶⁰ Dover 1968: 109.

⁵⁶¹ Cf. 1075. See Dover 1968: 227 and Sommerstein 1982: 213-14 for the similarity between Weaker Logos's philosophy and Thrasymachus and Callicles.

ἐν τοῖσι φροντισταῖσιν, ὅτι πρότιστος ἐπενόησα
τοῖσιν νόμοις καὶ ταῖς δίκαις τάναντί' ἀντιλέξαι.

For I was named Weaker Logos among the sophists
For this very reason, because I was the very first to get the idea
Of arguing the opposite of norms and judgments.

In principle he is the voice of dissent; only *by circumstance* does he become the voice of amorality. And that circumstance is created when he is pitted against the cicada-wearing, old Cronippus. Were he placed in a different environment, he would no doubt have different arguments.

10.3.3 The Resolution of the Debate

So far, then, Aristophanes represents the essence of the stronger and weaker logoi precisely as Protagoras construed them. For both the stronger logos is the consensus view, while the weaker is the dissent view. To continue the Protagorean program, Aristophanes must now have Stronger Logos bring Weaker Logos over to his side. Instead, however, an entire reversal of the Protagorean program is enacted. After Weaker Logos's exasperating refutations of the mythological precedents which Stronger Logos had cited, Stronger Logos agrees to admit defeat if Weaker Logos can prove that being εὐρύπρωκτος (wide-arsed) entails nothing bad (1085-88). Weaker Logos proceeds to point out that that behavior in Athens is actually the norm, not the exception. The public advocates of Athens are εὐρύπρωκτοι; so are the tragedians and the politicians (1088-94). Finally, Stronger Logos is told to look at the audience and say which type of person is in the majority. He has to admit that the εὐρύπρωκτοι are the majority: πολὺ πλείονας, νῆ τοὺς θεοὺς/τοὺς εὐρυπρώκτους ("by the gods [I see] that the wide-arsed are by far more numerous") (1098-99). Converted by the revelation that this behavior is, contrary to expectation, the Athenian norm, Stronger Logos not only admits defeat, but crosses over to

Weaker Logos's side, an action he emphatically denotes through the military metaphor of deserting to the enemy's camp (ἐξαντομολῶ) (1098-1104).⁵⁶²

This resolution of the debate is significant. The young Pheidippides does not evaluate two positions, then choose one over the other. Yet, if Protagoras's weaker-stronger fragment involved, according to the pejorative interpretation, the rejection of a morally superior argument for a morally inferior one; or, according to more positive interpretations such as Cole's and Schiappa's, an interchange between opposites, one would expect Stronger Logos in Aristophanes' parody to be cast aside and discarded. But he is not. He joins Weaker Logos. Victory does not entail interchange, but transformation and a comic integration into Athenian society. Thus, division is avoided and harmony, albeit a harmony of reprehensible beliefs, is achieved. Moreover, he joins the side of Weaker Logos only after he realizes that the moral tradition he has been representing is actually outdated and that the majority of Athenians nowadays thinks differently. Thus the Aristophanic parody of Protagoras's stronger and weaker logoi, with its reconciliation of two sides according to the standard of consistency with the moral environment, serves as strong evidence that what Protagoras meant by "making the weaker logos stronger" did in fact aim at the transformation of the dissension view into the consensus view, at making the weaker logos *the* stronger logos. Aristophanes constructs his parody by merely reversing the Protagorean procedure, a move which, by the way, may have had consequences for the subsequent (mis)understanding of the technique as a way to make a false claim appear true for the sake of a legal victory.

⁵⁶² It is debated whether Stronger Logos, in deserting to the enemy, bolts into the audience (Dover 1968: 228) or enters into the Phrontisterion (Sommerstein 1982: 215). See Stone 1980: 321n3 for a summary of interpretations. It is at any rate clear that, however the movements of the actor are to be explained, the desertion is to the viewpoint represented by both Weaker Logos and the audience; hence the plural ὑμᾶς (1104). Cf. Stone 1980: 322.

10.4 “RE-DISPOSITIONING”

From the evidence so far treated an interesting point about terminology results. When one reads, as I propose, the two-logoi fragment, the *Theaetetus* passage and the weaker-stronger fragment as referring to the same technique, one sees that Protagoras described the consensus and dissension view in various ways. The consensus view was alternatively the approved (χρηστός),⁵⁶³ the better (ἀμείνων, βελτίων) and the stronger (κρείττων) view, while the dissension view was the unapproved (πονηρός), the worse (χείρων)⁵⁶⁴ and the weaker (ἥττων) view. Additionally, as evidenced in the *Theaetetus* passage, Protagoras likened the consensus view to healthiness and the dissension view to sickness, and even conceptualized them in terms of health and sickness. This plurality of descriptors is perfectly understandable in the case of a philosopher who rejected the notion of objective truth and so saw no meaning in the usual valuations of things as right and wrong, true and false, good and bad.

How did Protagoras intend to change the person who had a perception at variance with the consensus, this odd man out? That he regarded the necessary change to entail a change of disposition (ἔξις) is clear from the *Theaetetus* passage. As he puts it: “In the same way in instruction too, a change from the one disposition to the better disposition is to be made” (Pl. *Tht.* 167a4-5). The sick man who thinks what he eats is bitter does not need to be educated – for he is not wrong. He is only at variance with the “healthy” view. He is therefore to be given a disposition which will cause him to perceive that the food tastes good.⁵⁶⁵ If changing one’s

⁵⁶³ The use of χρηστός and πονηρός is particularly instructive. As opposed to ἀγαθός and κακός, which as philosophical terms denoted the objective notions of good and bad, χρηστός and πονηρός signified adherence to, and violation of, a community’s ideal of excellence (cf. Dover 1974: 50-53, 296-99). It is therefore no surprise that Protagoras preferred these adjectives to ἀγαθός and κακός, since, as descriptors of social behavior and status, they allowed for an idea of the conventionality of values.

⁵⁶⁴ See n512 above.

⁵⁶⁵ Pl. *Tht.* 167b1.

disposition, and thereby his perception, is expressed as making the weaker logos *the* stronger, how exactly does one do that?

10.4.1 Bewitching Words

Protagoras explains. Immediately after asserting that a change of disposition must take place, he introduces an analogy to show what that entails: ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἱατρὸς φαρμάκοις μεταβάλλει, ὁ δὲ σοφιστὴς λόγοις (“but the physician makes the change by drugs, the sophist with words”) (Pl. *Tht.* 167a5-6). This is an important analogy. The mention of logoi immediately conjures up ideas of logical argumentation, and some have interpreted the word accordingly.⁵⁶⁶ However, this reading fails to do justice to the analogy. The drugs a doctor uses steal insensibly upon the patient and work upon him imperceptibly. Moreover, the word itself used for drugs, *pharmaka* is worthy of remark. In antiquity the line between a true physician and a dealer in poisons and panaceas was often hard to draw, and the medicines both dealt in were all *pharmaka*.⁵⁶⁷ Hence, when Protagoras likens the logoi of a sophist to the drugs of a doctor, the word choice, as well as the analogy itself, implies that the change the sophist can bring about is imperceptible and “under the radar.”

The idea of an imperceptible influence in the rhetoric of Protagoras is present in Plato's portrait of his character in the *Protagoras*. When Socrates and Hippocrates arrive at Callias' house, where Protagoras is staying, they find him strolling up and down the portico, surrounded by a throng of young admirers, many of whom, Socrates explains, were foreigners “whom Protagoras draws out of every city he passes through, bewitching (κηλῶν) them with his voice like Orpheus; and they, bewitched, (κεκηλημένοι), follow him by the sound of his voice” (315a9-

⁵⁶⁶ E.g. Farrar 1988: 74-75.

⁵⁶⁷ Cf. Hdt. 3.85.2; Ar. *Plut.* 302, *Thesm.* 561.

b2). Socrates stresses the similarity between Protagoras and Orpheus. He uses the words “bewitch” (κηλεῖν) and voice (φωνή) twice in the same sentence and, in case that was not enough, later makes another allusion to the charm of Protagoras’s words. After Protagoras delivers the Great Speech, Socrates tells how he himself had listened to the sophist “under a bewitching spell.” Again, the word is κεκηλημένος (328d4). Plato, through the character of Socrates, is mocking Protagoras.⁵⁶⁸ For the mockery to have any wit and point, Protagoras had to have spoken of his rhetoric in terms that allowed for parody. The analogy between the sophist and the physician is a perfect example of a claim open to such parody.

10.4.2 Praise and Blame

But this “bewitching” only *describes* Protagoras’s technique of changing a person’s disposition. It does not *explain* how it was effected. Here, a quotation from Stephanus Byzantinus is of great help. In his *Ethnica* under the lemma “Abdera” he mentions Protagoras, obviously because Abdera was his birthplace. He then adds some information culled from the geographical work of Eudoxus of Cnidus: Πρωταγόρας, ὃν Εὐδόξος ἱστορεῖ τὸν ἥσσω καὶ κρείσσω λόγον πεποιηκέναι καὶ τοὺς μαθητὰς δεδιδασχέναι τὸν αὐτὸν ψέγειν καὶ ἐπαινεῖν (“Protagoras, who Eudoxus records construed the weaker and stronger account and taught his students to censure and praise the same [account]”).⁵⁶⁹

There are two interesting points about this quotation. First, it preserves a formulation of Protagoras’s claim to “make the weaker case stronger” in a significantly different form than Aristotle’s. Instead of “making the weaker stronger,” Protagoras is said to have construed (πεποιηκέναι) the weaker *and* the stronger. There is no reason to think that Eudoxus’ formulation

⁵⁶⁸ Cf. Denyer 2008: 81.

⁵⁶⁹ DK 80 A21.

is faulty. On the contrary, according to my interpretation it makes just as much sense as Aristotle's, if not more. Protagoras first reduced all perceptions of a given object to two logoi. He then qualified the two logoi, sometimes, as in *Theaetetus*, as better and worse and as healthy and sick; at other times, as stronger and weaker. The Eudoxus formulation describes that stage of the process, the stage of reduction: "he made [i.e. construed] the weaker and stronger account." Having made this reduction to two, he then endeavored to bring the dissenting account (the weaker logos) into line with the consensus view (the stronger logos). This would be the stage of making the weaker logos *the* stronger logos. Aristotle and Eudoxus simply describe different stages of the same process.

Secondly, and more to the point, the Eudoxus fragment gives a clue as to how Protagoras proposed to change the disposition of the one who held the dissension view. It records that Protagoras also taught his students to praise and censure the same account (τὸν αὐτὸν ψέγειν καὶ ἐπαινεῖν). Supplying λόγον from the first part of the sentence, one understands Eudoxus to be saying that he taught them "to censure and praise the same account." The pairing of the praise/censure doctrine with the weaker-stronger doctrine is meaningful. There is clearly no Aristotelian influence, as Aristotle restricts praise and censure to the epideictic branch of oratory (*Rh.* 1358b12-13, 1366a23-1368a37).⁵⁷⁰ Nor is Eudoxus randomly recording two unrelated Protagorean teachings, as the ellipsis of λόγον shows. Instead, he is giving the beginning and the end of the same process. Protagoras, he explains, divided perceptions into two, the stronger and the weaker and (when he came to make the weaker *the* stronger) relied on techniques of praise and blame.

What exactly do these techniques amount to? To tally now the evidence from the *Theaetetus*, the *Protagoras*, and Eudoxus, in arguing a position, Protagoras taught the student,

⁵⁷⁰ It is worth noting that praise and blame find their way into the debate in the *Clouds* (1045, 1055).

not to deploy logical proofs one after the other, but to speak “under the radar.” Namely, the speaker was to assess the dissenting portion of the audience and discover what obstacle stood in the way of their believing as he himself and the majority did. Then, he was to address, not the case head-on, but that obstacle or bias that prevented those members of the audience from seeing the situation as he saw it. Finally, he was to challenge that bias by praise and blame. This technique, he expected, would change the disposition (ἔξις) of the dissenting portion of the audience, in order that as many people as possible might think the same way. This entire process is sufficiently indirect to be characterized as “bewitching” (κηλεῖν).

10.4.3 Praise and Blame as a Mechanism for Societal Education

Interestingly, this doctrine of praise and censure as a rhetorical technique for achieving genuine unanimity mirrors the role Protagoras assigns praise and punishment in his interpretation of education as a vehicle that creates ethical and cultural conformity. As he explains in the *Protagoras*, political virtue (ἡ πολιτικὴ τέχνη) is not expertise in the specialized discipline of political governance. Rather, it is the social and ethical, as well as political, equipment needed by civilized people to coexist in a community. In short, it is the knowledge of civilization.⁵⁷¹ This knowledge is passed on through life in the polis. As Protagoras goes on to explain, parents, nurses, teachers and fellow citizens compel the young, as they grow, to hold the same values as they do (325c5-326e4). This societal education involves punishment (κόλασις) which is no vindictive act, but a mechanism for conformity. It straightens (εὐθύνει) any aberrant tendency in the citizen.⁵⁷² But punishment is just one arm in the process of societal education. Praise is the other. Elementary teachers and music instructors, when they teach reading, writing and music,

⁵⁷¹ See esp. 327e1-328a9. Cf. Wood & Wood 1978: 135.

⁵⁷² Protagoras uses this word (εὐθύνειν) to describe the correction of both children (325d6) and magistrates (326e2).

use material that is full of praise of values deemed good by the community, so that the child will admire (ζηλῶν) and imitate them (325d7-326b5). In sum, the environment teaches the citizens the knowledge of civilization (as locally practiced) through a process of punishment and praise.⁵⁷³ In just this same way the rhetorical theory of Protagoras instructs the orator to change the disposition of the dissenting portion of the audience through praise and censure. Thus his rhetorical program is an attempt to mimic artificially what he considers the social process to be. His rhetoric continues the process of societal education in the more complicated field of political decision-making. Rhetoric is education (and *vice versa*). Just as the child learns his city's virtue through praise and punishment, so the dissenter is brought round to the consensus view by praise and censure.

But in both cases – the child and the dissenter – the praise and censure is indirect. Indeed, one might say, manipulative. So at least it might appear *prima facie*. However, in the context of Protagoras's political thought, it does not appear quite so sinister. He was trying to solve the problem of disagreement in a democratic government. He recognized that real agreement was necessary, because the weight of numbers (that is, majority rule) in an aristocratic culture, far from being an argument for unified action, was actually the contrary. What did it matter to the aristocrats and elite what *hoi polloi* thought, no matter how numerous they were?⁵⁷⁴ He therefore developed a rhetorical program that aimed at securing genuine agreement. It was not meant to manipulate, but to harmonize, citizen opinion.⁵⁷⁵ Robin Osborne has drawn attention to the role the Athenians deliberately meant their social institutions and practices to have in creating

⁵⁷³ See Balot 2006: 78 for a similar reading of *Prt.* 324d2-326e5.

⁵⁷⁴ Aristotle discusses the argument that democratic decision-making is better precisely because it operates on the principle that two heads are better than one (*Pol.* III.6.4-5 [1281b]), but is careful to point out that this argument cannot justify democracy in general, only democracies where full citizenship is extended to those of a certain level of education. Thus this argument has little or nothing to do with the fifth-century democracy.

⁵⁷⁵ Cf. *Pl. Prt.* 326b5-6, where Protagoras praises harmony in general, abstract terms.

“homogeneity” of outlook and attitude in the citizen body.⁵⁷⁶ Protagoras’s rhetoric, aiming at securing city-wide same-mindedness (ὁμόνοια),⁵⁷⁷ represents a similar effort to institutionalize the homogeneity of outlook regarded as so integral to the Athenian democracy.

10.5 RHETORIC AND THE CREATION OF *HOMONOIA*

In sum, the rhetoric of Protagoras was a system designed to secure agreement to the consensus view. It involved several steps. First, the speaker was to reduce all perceptions to the basic two that were opposite to each other. Next, he was to decide which of the two the consensus view was. This he determined by an empirical analysis of the social environment in question.⁵⁷⁸

Having determined what the consensus view was, he dubbed it the stronger, since it had proved to be the view that was most prevalent; or the better, since, being prevalent, it was the quickest route to harmony; or again the approved, since it was sanctioned by the community’s standards; or again healthy, since by sheer weight of numbers it was the norm. Likewise, the less prevalent view – the minority view - he called the weaker, the worse, the unapproved and the sick.

Now, if the minority view was not represented in considerable numbers, it could be ignored. If on the other hand the minority view was sufficiently represented as to jeopardize social harmony, the speaker’s task was now to bring the dissenters over to the consensus side. This he achieved not by arguing them into agreement. That would only result in a grudging cooperation. Rather, he first isolated the idea that prevented them from agreeing with the consensus view. Then, by praising or censuring that idea, whichever the situation called for, he attempted to transform their disposition (ἔξις) towards the idea into the opposite disposition. This

⁵⁷⁶ 1994: 48-58.

⁵⁷⁷ See Guthrie 1971: 149-51 for the place of ὁμόνοια in fifth-century political thought.

⁵⁷⁸ See Pl. *Prt.* 323a5-324d1 for an example of Protagoras’s empirical analyses which Plato there may be parodying.

re-dispositioned ἔξις would make the dissenters genuinely perceive the issue as their neighbors did. Or, metaphorically, it would make those who were sick perceive the way the healthy did. Once they did so, the weaker logos would be the same as the stronger and a genuine same-mindedness would (ideally) prevail in the city.

11.0 THE HEALTHY CITY: THE RHETORICAL STRATEGY OF THE PERICLEAN FUNERAL SPEECH

In chapters eight and nine I attempt to show that the Periclean funeral speech in Thucydides contains a Protagorean dimension on the conceptual level in that Pericles' description of Athenian political culture has meaningful resonances with ideas that figured in Protagoras' political theory. In addition to this conceptual parallelism, I suggest that there is a rhetorical one as well. The Periclean speech attempts to produce an effect in the audience members that bears a close resemblance to Protagoras' rhetorical teachings as laid out in chapter ten. In the first place, the overall approach the speech takes presupposes an outlook mirroring Protagoras' unique brand of relativism that deferred to the city's opinion as authoritative amid a plethora of individual opinions. Secondly, the speech aims at establishing a genuine unanimity and same-mindedness (ὁμόνοια) in the city regarding the recent casualties of the war, and by extension regarding the war itself, by transforming a group of dissenters into citizens who agree with what is represented as the city's opinion. In this respect the speech becomes an example of Protagoras' technique of making the weaker logos the stronger. Thirdly, it attempts to bring about this transformation by altering the disposition (ἔξις) of the group of dissenters to the disposition directly opposite to it. Thus, not only does it seek to make the weaker logos the stronger, but seeks to do so by means of the very "re-dispositioning" that Protagoras prescribed. These three aspects combine to give the speech on the rhetorical plane a Protagorean dimension just as pronounced as that operating on the conceptual plane.

The presence of this Protagorean dimension in the rhetoric of the funeral speech raises a question concerning what point this dimension is designed to make. As I argue in the previous chapter, Protagoras taught how to bring the discordant members of the citizen population into genuine agreement with the majority view in the interests of same-mindedness, or *ὁμόνοια*. This *ὁμόνοια* represented for Protagoras a state of health for the city (see subsection 10.1.2). It brings health to the city because it brings “whole-ness,” reducing disagreement and factionalism and ultimately preventing *stasis* by synchronizing the citizens’ opinions together (see subsection 9.1.1). In short, Protagorean “whole-ness” is political wholeness for the city. This conceptualization of his theory in medical terms suggests that the presence of a Protagorean dimension in the funeral speech is meant to conjure up ideas of health and wellness and ultimately to convey the impression that the funeral speech is imparting health and wellness to Athens. The change of the dissenters so that they can agree with the majority view bespeaks unanimity in the polis, which in turn signifies the polis is well and ready for war. Athens, the speech implies, is healthy.

This impression of health raises another question concerning the responsibility for both this impression and, in more general terms, the Protagorean dimension as a whole in the speech. Two main options seem available. If the speech is a Thucydidean report and reworking of the actual speech that Pericles delivered after the first summer of fighting during the Peloponnesian War, then the Protagorean aspects that I argue are present in the speech must be regarded as spillage: Pericles was one of many who had been influenced by Protagoras and so when he came to compose a speech for the fallen soldiers he did so according to rhetorical precepts he had learned from the sophist; and so, when Thucydides wrote up the speech in his own style, this Protagorean rhetoric spilled over along with everything else. Alternatively, if the speech is by

and large the creation of Thucydides and does not record an actual address of Pericles, then the dimension of Protagorean rhetoric in the speech must be attributed to the authorship of Thucydides. These two options are simply another manifestation of the difficulty involved in interpreting the methodological statement Thucydides makes at 1.22.1 and the debate concerning all speeches in Thucydides between the proponents of historical accuracy and those of free compositions.⁵⁷⁹

As controversial as that issue is,⁵⁸⁰ a consideration of the interplay between the impression that the Protagorean rhetorical dimension creates and the position the speech occupies in the history suggests that of the two options stated above the second is the more likely. As suggested above, that impression is one of health and wholeness. The fact, then, that immediately after the speech an actual plague strikes Athens suggests that there is some meaning in this juxtaposition of a rhetorical health with an actual disease; and this meaning in turn suggests that the author is orchestrating elements in both the plague-narrative and the funeral speech. This being the case, it would seem that the funeral speech is subject to a considerable degree of Thucydidean control. That said, it would also be unreasonable to claim that Thucydides foisted upon Pericles Protagorean ideas and aspects without just cause. If Protagorean thought and technique are found in a Periclean speech, Thucydides in all likelihood had reason to incorporate them. This is not merely a supposition conditioned by modern demands on historiography, but an expectation that derives from Thucydides' own expressed commitment to report the general purport of what was really said (τῆς ξυμπάσης γνώμης τῶν ἀληθῶς λεχθέντων).⁵⁸¹ And on this point the examination of Protagoras' life offered in chapter

⁵⁷⁹ See Pelling 2009: 179 for these labels.

⁵⁸⁰ Cf. Rusten 2009b: 5: "Thus there is no approach one can take to the speeches that will not come into conflict with other opposed, widely held, and not unreasonable interpretations."

⁵⁸¹ 1.22.1. Cf. Hornblower 1987: 65-66; Pelling 2009: 180-182.

seven has confirmatory value by suggesting that Thucydides had ample grounds for accepting a Periclean indebtedness to Protagoras.

It would therefore seem best to take a compromise position between historical accuracy and free composition, as for example Hornblower and Pelling do,⁵⁸² and say that the impression of health, as the Protagorean dimension in general, reflects both Pericles' and Thucydides' agenda. Historically, Pericles aimed at rendering the citizen population more unanimous and same-minded regarding the war and in doing so implemented Protagorean technique and thought. Historiographically, Thucydides (himself in the audience?) was fully aware of what Pericles was attempting rhetorically to accomplish and in writing it up brought to the fore these Protagorean aspects. And if in highlighting there was also a degree of exaggeration or addition, that is excusable, as long as one can trust that Thucydides may indeed have added ideas and aspects to his portrait of Pericles that were not expressed in any single speech, but known or inferred by the historian in the course of his research.⁵⁸³ Thus, while the impression of health and wellness the speech aims at, as well as the Protagorean influence on the whole, originally belongs to Pericles, the controlling hand of Thucydides is present, not simply recording and re-creating that influence, but displaying and positioning it in such a way as to make nuances and implications, perhaps not originally perceived or intended, stand out and become visible. The healthy city in different ways is the product of both Pericles' and Thucydides' agenda.

11.1 THE ΔΟΞΑ / ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑ ANTITHESIS

As noted in the introduction above (section 11.0), the first aspect of Protagorean influence in the rhetorical agenda of the funeral speech is the overall approach Pericles takes in response to the

⁵⁸² Hornblower 1987: 71; Pelling 2009: 180-183.

⁵⁸³ Thus E. Meyer (cited in Pelling 2009: 180n11) suggested that Pericles' first speech was a composite of several.

dilemma that faces him. Specifically, the approach recalls Protagorean relativism. Briefly stated, Protagorean relativism acknowledged the incorrigibility of individuals' opinions, but negotiated between them by isolating, as a type of common denominator, the city's opinion and regarding that as authoritative (see chapter 4). Similarly, Pericles' approach to resolving the dichotomy presented by the audience members makes assumptions about the individual's opinion, the nature of truth and the primacy of the city's opinion that parallel and mirror that theory of relativism. This approach, and the assumptions it makes, are expressed in the proem of the speech (2.35) and are organized around an antithesis involving human opinion (δόξα) and truth (ἀλήθεια).

11.1.1 A Relativist Approach

As just noted, Pericles' approach is a close response to the dilemma he encounters, but just what that dilemma is is not entirely clear. His first words are (2.35.1):

Οἱ μὲν πολλοὶ τῶν ἐνθάδε ἤδη εἰρηκότων ἐπαινοῦσι τὸν προσθέντα τῷ νόμῳ τὸν λόγον τόνδε, ὥς καλὸν ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐκ τῶν πολέμων θαπτομένοις ἀγορεύεσθαι αὐτόν. ἐμοὶ δὲ ἄρκοῦν ἂν ἐδόκει εἶναι ἀνδρῶν ἀγαθῶν ἔργῳ γενομένων ἔργῳ καὶ δηλοῦσθαι τὰς τιμὰς, οἷα καὶ νῦν περὶ τὸν τάφον τόνδε δημοσίᾳ παρασκευασθέντα ὁρᾶτε, καὶ μὴ ἐν ἐνὶ ἀνδρὶ πολλῶν ἀρετὰς κινδυνεύεσθαι εὖ τε καὶ χεῖρον εἰπόντι πιστευθῆναι.

Owing to the obvious presence of a λόγος/ἔργον antithesis, this dilemma at first glance appears to be the risk involved in one's attempt to substantiate in speech the actuality of action. If these men's meritorious actions in the service of the state are truly laudable, yet his eulogy fails to convince the audience of their merit, then Pericles will have done them, and ultimately Athens, a disservice. It is better therefore to remain silent and let deed (τάφος) speak for deed (heroism). This is the way in which Adam Parry, for example, understands the passage. After giving a

summary of the paragraph in terms of a λόγος/ἔργον antithesis, he concludes: “Pericles will try to give his words enough force to demonstrate the truth of the deeds which he will recount.”⁵⁸⁴

This dilemma proves to be a red herring, though. For, upon closer inspection, the λόγος/ἔργον antithesis is weakened when the truth of the subjects’ valor – the essence of their ἔργον – is challenged. This challenge comes about in two steps. The first step occurs when Pericles introduces another antithesis, that between human opinion and truth (δόξα/ἀλήθεια). As the passage progresses, he observes (2.35.2):

χαλεπὸν γὰρ τὸ μετρίως εἰπεῖν ἐν ᾧ μόλις ἡ δόκησις τῆς ἀληθείας βεβαιοῦται. ὃ τε γὰρ
ξυνειδῶς καὶ εὖνους ἀκροατῆς τάχ’ ἂν τι ἐνδεεστέρως πρὸς ἃ βούλεται τε καὶ ἐπίσταται
νομίσειε δηλοῦσθαι, ὃ τε ἄπειρος ἔστιν ἃ καὶ πλεονάζεσθαι, διὰ φθόνον, εἴ τι ὑπὲρ τὴν
αὐτοῦ φύσιν ἀκούοι.

The reason why one should not attempt to put into words the valor of the fallen is because such a speech is an instance when μόλις ἡ δόκησις τῆς ἀληθείας βεβαιοῦται. From the nine other instances of δόκησις in Thucydides it is clear that the word, true to its origin in δοκέω, offers a range of meanings from appearance to judgment.⁵⁸⁵ What Pericles is saying then is that in recounting deeds of heroism, one’s judgment, one’s account of what truly happened (ἡ δόκησις τῆς ἀληθείας) scarcely finds confirmation, to say nothing of the incontrovertibly true account. Why not? Because in matters like this one people determine the “facts” on the basis of personal knowledge and desires. On the one side stands the audience member who will be quite upset if the praise for the fallen soldiers proves stinting, while on the other hand stands the audience member who will find fault with Pericles if the praise waxes excessive. Pericles encounters an obstacle in reaching even the appearance of truth, much less the truth itself, and that obstacle is presented by human presupposition. The λόγος/ἔργον antithesis has now been displaced by another antithesis, that of truth and human opinion (δόξα/ἀλήθεια). And the fact that truth is

⁵⁸⁴ 1981: 161.

⁵⁸⁵ 2.84, 3.43, 3.45, 4.18, 4.87, 4.126, 5.16, 6.64, 7.67.

represented, not by an unqualified ἀλήθεια, but in the phrase ἡ δόκησις τῆς ἀληθείας (what men grasp to be the truth),⁵⁸⁶ is portentous, as will shortly be discussed.

Now that the δόξα/ἀλήθεια antithesis has come into play, the next step can be deployed. It consists in Pericles' reaction to that δόξα/ἀλήθεια antithesis. If he were advocating for the claims of truth, he might say a word or two by way of corroboration of those ἔργα that the fallen demonstrated, as do other *epitaphioi*. For instance, Lysias, upon introducing the λόγος/ἔργον antithesis in the first sentence to his funeral speech, expatiates upon the worth of the fallen (ἡ τούτων ἀρετή) in the next: So great was their valor that poets and orators will never be at a loss in praising it, even though one might think the possible topics to be exhausted. Pericles, however, does nothing of the sort. Instead, after discussing the psychology of φθόνος for a moment, he declares (2.35.3):

ἐπειδὴ δὲ τοῖς πάλαι οὕτως ἐδοκιμάσθη ταῦτα καλῶς ἔχειν, χρὴ καὶ ἐμὲ ἐπόμενον τῷ νόμῳ πειρᾶσθαι ὑμῶν τῆς ἐκάστου βουλήσεως τε καὶ δόξης τυχεῖν ὥς ἐπὶ πλεῖστον.

Instead of assuring those who expect lavish praise that they are right to do so; and instead of chastising the envious (and Thucydides assures us that Pericles could criticize the Athenians with impunity [2.65.8]), Pericles promises to deliver such a speech as will satisfy the desire (βούλησις) and opinion (δόξα) of either (ἐκάστου) side.⁵⁸⁷ In other words, his overall logic runs so: "I'm going to praise these men. But this is one of those situations where, if I speak the truth, or even what purports to be the truth, I won't get a fair, impersonal hearing. Therefore, my approach in this speech will be to give confirmation to that very personal opinion and desire of yours that make a true account so elusive." Human opinion and perception are elevated over truth. Δόξα trumps ἀλήθεια. In accordance with Protagorean relativism, Pericles takes an approach that implies the essential correctness of the two views that face him, mutually exclusive

⁵⁸⁶ For "grasp," see Hornblower 1991: ad loc.

⁵⁸⁷ For ἑκάστος = ἐκάτερος see LSJ s. v. II.2.

though they be. He decides not to advocate for truth, but to cooperate with the desire and opinions of the audience. He does this because, significantly, he believes that belief and unbelief are the products of opinion, not knowledge.

11.1.2 Belief and Opinion

Relativism appears again in what Pericles says about the relationship of opinion and belief.

Pericles assumes that opinion creates belief. He has already noted that the merit of the fallen will be believed according as one speaks well or poorly (2.35.1). Soon he voices a similar sentiment, when discussing the psychology of envy (2.35.2):

μέχρι γὰρ τοῦδε ἀνεκτοὶ οἱ ἔπαινοί εἰσι περὶ ἐτέρων λεγόμενοι, ἐς ὅσον ἂν καὶ αὐτὸς ἕκαστος οἴηται ἰκανὸς εἶναι δρᾶσαι τι ὧν ἤκουσεν· τῷ δὲ ὑπερβάλλοντι αὐτῶν φθονοῦντες ἤδη καὶ ἀπιστοῦσιν.

If the praise of the fallen exceeds the capacity of the individual who is unfamiliar (ἄπειρος) with them, then he will conceive envy towards them and refuse to believe the praise. When the issue is profuse praise, lack of familiarity creates envy which in turn creates unbelief. Taken at face value, this psychological analysis appears problematic. First of all, it assumes that the members of the audience who do not know the fallen will respond to their fulsome praise with jealousy and doubt. This assumption does not give much credit to those whom Pericles elsewhere considers excellent thinkers (cf. 2.40.2). Besides the problem of inconsistency, his analysis also assumes belief and unbelief are the *products* of an envious attitude, a claim that is far from self-evident, since the opposite claim can be just as true, that an envious disposition is the product of belief and unbelief when one hears words that do not square with deeds.⁵⁸⁸ In short, Pericles' assessment of envy cannot be dismissed as a facile truism for the simple reason that it is just not true. But taken as a relativist analysis, it becomes much more intelligible; tendentious, but not

⁵⁸⁸ And Pericles' contemporary, Hippias, discussed these two types of φθόνος. See DK 86 B16.

problematic. Since one uses himself as judge, when one responds to fulsome praise with envy, it is no base act of malice, but the standard process of thinking. As for belief, it will always be the result of one's disposition, as there is no objective reality upon which to base one's belief. Pericles' psychology of envy either reflects a Protagorean outlook (as seems more likely) or assumes the Athenians, in contradiction to the rest of the speech, are impulse-driven, unreflective creatures.

Thus on the whole the proem shows a preoccupation with opinion. Pericles chooses to satisfy it, and does so because it is, he assumes, the key to belief. In the meantime, the second member of the δόξα/ἀλήθεια antithesis is forgotten. Just why it is forgotten may well be suggested by the language the proem uses. On a verbal level, the proem lays unmistakable emphasis on thinking (δόξα). In the first sentence (2.35.1) ὥς subsumes καλόν into the opinion of the previous orators: The institution of the eulogy is not a fine thing *full stop*, Pericles makes clear, but a thing *considered* fine by all who have previously spoken.⁵⁸⁹ In the next, Pericles' own position is stated as his personal mental perception (ἐδόκει). Similarly, the reaction of the audience is expressed as an act of their thinking (νομίσαι), and the self-estimation of the envious is an act of supposing (οἷται). Finally, as just noted, Pericles adopts an approach that privileges the δόξα of both sides, when he declares that he will aim at satisfying the desire and opinion of both divisions of the audience. For a speech on real valor, Pericles' language is quite attuned to people's perceptions.

This emphasis on thinking has consequences for the word δόκησις. As already noted, the word ranges semantically between appearance and judgment, and so I translated it "account."⁵⁹⁰ At first glance this appears to be exactly what Pericles means. However, once Pericles chooses

⁵⁸⁹ Cf. Rusten 1989: ad loc. However, it is not enough simply to call ὥς here "causal," as Rusten does; it should be specified that it is causal in the perspective of the οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν εἰρηκότων. See Smyth 2086 & 2086d.

⁵⁹⁰ See above, p. 256 and n549 & 550.

human opinion over truth on the grounds that it has more power for belief, it becomes clear that the phrase had simultaneously supplied the explanation as to why he would not land on truth's side: Namely, any judgment on the truth is just an appearance of it, any grasp of it is but a subjective grasp. Pericles must choose δόξα because there is nothing but countless versions of truth. In other words, Thucydides here engages in some wordplay in that he makes use of the inherent ambiguity of δόκησις.⁵⁹¹ However, that is not to say that the relativism in Pericles' approach is hopelessly pluralistic. In this multitude of versions that face him, the orators', his own, the audience members', it is the city's he finally follows. For, while the city's act of approbation is also an act of opining (ἐδοκιμάσθη), it is an opinion that has the weight of the majority, both past (τοῖς πάλαι) and present (οἱ μὲν πολλοὶ τῶν ἐνθάδε ἤδη εἰρηκότων) (cf. subsection 9.3.2).

11.1.3 Conclusion

In short, the λόγος/ἔργον antithesis serves only as a veneer plastered over an antithesis more central to the passage (and to the speech as a whole), that of human opinion and truth, of what seems to be and what is. Pericles' reaction to this antithesis reveals a degree of commitment to Protagorean relativism. His approach to the rhetorical dilemma that faces him, his analysis of human belief, and his emphasis of “thinking” words reflect Protagorean epistemological assumptions. Be that as it may, the λόγος/ἔργον antithesis is not a useless appendage. On the contrary, it is present in order to expose the other antithesis. It is an epitaphic commonplace⁵⁹² presupposing an outlook of objectivity that Thucydides puts into the mouth of Pericles for the

⁵⁹¹ See subsection 8.1.1 for another possible wordplay in this same passage. Cf. Parry 1981: 171 for the suggestion that at 2.42.4 Thucydides similarly uses both senses of δόξα.

⁵⁹² Cf. Lys. 2.1; Pl. *Menex.* 236d4-e8; D. *Epit.* 1; Hyp. *Epit.* 1-2.

sake of pointing out the outlook of relativism present in the proem. It undermines even as it is undermined.

11.2 STRATEGY: VINDICATION AND RE-DISPOSITIONING

Just as Protagorean relativism informs the approach Pericles takes towards his divided audience, so Protagorean rhetorical technique directs the strategy Pericles attempts to execute throughout the speech. In encountering two groups: Those who expect the fallen to be praised to the skies and those who will be quick to mark any exaggeration, Pericles is faced with two λόγοι which, in his intention to satisfy both sides, he implies are both correct. According to the Protagorean program of making the weaker logos the stronger, Pericles should diagnose these two equally valid, but opposing λόγοι, ascertain which one is the “healthy” one (in the sense that it is more consistent with the Athenian ethical tradition) and which is the “sick” one (in the sense that it is the dissenting view). Then, by applying praise or blame, he should transform those who hold the sick view so that they see eye to eye with those who hold the healthy view, with the goal of securing greater same-mindedness in the state.

This is exactly what he does. He (not surprisingly) determines those who expect lavish praise to be the ones who hold the healthy view. However, his siding with them is not *a priori*, but explained and accounted for in a most powerful way. In praising the fallen he bases his praise of them on the idea that they re-enact the glorious deeds of their ancestors and represent an unbroken tradition that began ages past. They thus epitomize the Protagorean ideal of being true to one’s polis, as it is in the present and as it was in the past.

While thus vindicating those who expect profuse praise, Pericles is at the same time also engaged in altering the dissenters in order to bring them round to the city's point of view and make the weaker logos *be what* the stronger logos is. According to Protagoras' rules, this alteration requires a change of disposition (ἔξις). The disposition Pericles finds in the dissenters is one of envy. Through direct praise of Athens (which indirectly reflects on them) and everything it stands for he attempts to "re-disposition" these envious audience members so that their attitude becomes the opposite of what it was. They move from envy (φθόνος) to envy's opposite, emulation (ζήλος).⁵⁹³

Thus the funeral speech shows Pericles deploying a two-part strategy in his vindicating the opinion of the one group and in his "re-wiring" the opinion of the other. In so doing, he renders Athenian consensus regarding the merit of the fallen soldiers more harmonious, which in turn renders Athenian consensus regarding the war more harmonious. Same-mindedness (ὁμόνοια) thus safeguarded and increased, dissension in the city should be minimized. Or, to use the medical metaphor Protagoras preferred, sickness will be diminished and the city rendered healthy. However, it remains to be seen whether this healthiness is actual or merely apparent; real or on the surface and concealing a ὑπουλος νόσος (see chapter 12 below).

11.3 VINDICATION: RE-ENACTING THE PAST

If those who expect lavish praise of the fallen do in fact hold the healthy view, then it must be demonstrated by Pericles that what these men who fell during the first summer of fighting in 431

⁵⁹³ Similarly, Aristotle (*Rh.* 1388a33-36) contrasts jealousy (φθόνος) and emulation (ζήλος). For the antithesis of jealousy and emulation in Greek thought generally, see Walcot 1978: *passim*, but esp. 1-7. For jealousy as the cultural response to the violation of democratic equality, see *ibid.* 58-62. For a similar reading of the funeral speech as a movement from jealousy to envy, cf. Sissa 2009: 287.

BC did accords with the city's opinion of what is to be done and what is not to be done; in short, with the city's ethicality. He cannot take it for granted that all Athenians will accept the principle that *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* without qualification, especially considering the ever-increasing polarization of Athens, if not all Greece, into democratic and oligarchic sympathies.⁵⁹⁴ He cannot, and does not; but instead represents their deed as a re-enactment of an ideal that has always been first on the Athenian agenda: Acquisition. This unanimity which he points out between the past and present on the score of the preservation and expansion of Athenian power serves to vindicate those who desire praise as the representatives of the stronger, healthy logos.

11.3.1 The Criterion for Praise

Beginning with the ancestors, Pericles says (2.36.1-2):

ἄρξομαι δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν προγόνων πρῶτον· δίκαιον γὰρ αὐτοῖς καὶ πρέπον δὲ ἅμα ἐν τῷ τοιῷδε τὴν τιμὴν ταύτην τῆς μνήμης δίδοσθαι. τὴν γὰρ χώραν οἱ αὐτοὶ αἰεὶ οἰκοῦντες διαδοχῇ τῶν ἐπιγιγνομένων μέχρι τοῦδε ἐλευθέραν δι' ἀρετὴν παρέδοσαν. καὶ ἐκεῖνοί τε ἄξιοι ἐπαίνου καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν· κτησάμενοι γὰρ πρὸς οἷς ἐδέξαντο ὅσῃν ἔχομεν ἀρχὴν οὐκ ἀπόνως ἡμῖν τοῖς νῦν προσκατέλιπον.

It is with good reason that he begins with the ancestors, seeing that they set the precedent of what is praiseworthy behavior for an Athenian. What that precedent exactly is comes into view when one compares this passage with its counterpart in other funeral speeches, where the help the Athenians' ancestors rendered to the Argives and Heracleidae usually comes in for mention.⁵⁹⁵ Here, however, Thucydides makes no mention of such Athenian philanthropy; instead the mythical age is reduced to one theme: Boundaries. The ancestors are divided into two, the forefathers (οἱ πρόγονοι) and the fathers (οἱ πατέρες). The former forestalled every attempt at

⁵⁹⁴ On which see Raaflaub 1990: 37-38.

⁵⁹⁵ See Lys. 2.7-16; Pl. *Menex.* 239b5-8; D. *Epit.* 8. Cf. Hdt. 9.27.2-3.

encroachment, whether by Amazons or any other force, and passed it on “free from foreign rule,” that is ἐλευθέρα.⁵⁹⁶ Joined with the idea of autonomy in the word ἐλευθέρα is that of allowing no diminution of their territory and for that reason their unbroken possession of the land is stressed (τὴν γὰρ χώραν οἱ αὐτοὶ αἰεὶ οἰκοῦντες διαδοχῇ τῶν ἐπιγιννομένων).⁵⁹⁷ The ancestors are praiseworthy, Pericles explains, for their valor (ἀρετή); and their valor consists in this: They never lost possession of their land.

For this same reason their fathers are also praiseworthy, but in order to sustain the comparison between ancestors and fathers Pericles must be permitted to introduce a modification and substitute for the land (χώρα) of the ancestors the realm (ἀρχή) of the fathers, since land *per se* is not the point. Indeed, it was the Periclean policy to deemphasize the importance of land (cf. 2.62.3) and this substitution should be seen as part of that de-emphasis. The point is property, patrimony, which their fathers inherited and added to (κτησάμενοι...πρὸς οἷς ἐδέξαντο). So important is the idea of enlarging the ancestral property that πρὸς (in addition to) needs to be uttered twice. The fathers are praiseworthy because of their stewardship of the territory. That is why they deserve even more praise (ἔτι μᾶλλον) for amplifying it.⁵⁹⁸

This characterization of the ancestors’ valor as devoted to the enlargement of the state is, I suggest, programmatic, meant to be the interpretive key for the praiseworthiness of the fallen who, Pericles will portray, live up to their forefathers’ ways.

⁵⁹⁶ Cf. Hornblower 1991: ad loc.

⁵⁹⁷ The idea of autochthony is also present (cf. Rusten 1989: ad loc), but only in the sense of unbroken possession, not in the sense of “earth-born” (see Rosivach 1987: 297-298).

⁵⁹⁸ Cf. Foster 2010: 190-193, who considers Pericles in this passage to be establishing imperial acquisition as “the foundation of Athenian success” (192).

11.3.2 True Sons

However, the lengthy description of Athenian political culture comes first which, as I will argue below (section 11.3), has more to do with the re-dispositioning of the envious than with the vindication of the benevolent (εὖνοι). When Pericles finally comes to the eulogy proper of the fallen soldiers (2.42.2-4), his theme is self-sacrifice. They gave their lives on behalf of the city, an act which redeems the base and cowardly (τοῖς τᾶλλα χείροσι) and thus *a fortiori* testifies to the worth of these men (τῶνδε δέ). This theme of self-sacrifice he develops by means of the public/private antithesis. Specifically, the two parts of the antithesis are defense against public enemies and the denial of private resources. They might have declined a hero's death in preference for the continued enjoyment of their wealth (πλούτου...τὴν ἔτι ἀπόλαυσιν) or in the hope of acquiring it (πενίας ἐλπίδι). But they didn't. Instead, they determined that private acquisition (τῶν δὲ ἐφίεσθαι) was permissible only as long as it did not interfere with the protection of the state (τοὺς μὲν τιμωρεῖσθαι). There is nothing inherently sordid about gain. This is an important point that Pericles makes clear elsewhere (see subsection 9.2.2). It becomes sordid, however, when it takes on greater priority than the state.⁵⁹⁹ Thus the public/private antithesis serves to set in relief their self-sacrifice.

It sets in relief their self-sacrifice, and it also interprets it. For the state to prosper, the citizens must take less; and these men took a great deal less. But their loss is the city's gain. Pericles depicts the death of these men as an accretion to the power and prestige of the polis. Their death was an embellishment and accentuation (ἐκόσμησαν) of the very excellent qualities which Pericles has just extolled in Athens, an honor that exceeds his own praise as much as deed

⁵⁹⁹ Pericles articulates a similar formula as the ideal attitude to the state at 2.60.3.

exceeds speech.⁶⁰⁰ More importantly, their death was a contribution (ἔρανος), offered to the city with patriotic abandon (προϊέμενοι), which likewise adds beauty to the city (κάλλιστον) and is almost directly responsible for the power the city enjoys (ὅταν μεγάλη δόξη εἶναι...) (2.43.1). The death and sacrifice was an act of acquisition (*ktēsis*) for the city. They set aside private gain so that the city might gain. The public/private antithesis underscores gain as the key idea about their death.

Being thus an act of *ktēsis*, their sacrifice sets them squarely in the tradition of their forebears. This harmony between the generations comes out most clearly in the passage just quoted. Discussing the need of the audience to be just as bold as the fallen, Pericles explains how power for the city is the result of such sacrifice, which they would realize if, when the city seems powerful (μεγάλη) to them, they but consider (2.43.1):

ὅτι τολμῶντες καὶ γινώσκοντες τὰ δέοντα καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις αἰσχυρόμενοι ἄνδρες αὐτὰ ἐκτήσαντο, καὶ ὁπότε καὶ πείρα του σφαλεῖεν, οὐκ οὖν καὶ τὴν πόλιν γε τῆς σφετέρως ἀρετῆς ἀξιοῦντες στερίσκειν, κάλλιστον δὲ ἔρανον αὐτῇ προϊέμενοι.

In this passage Pericles' vindication of the benevolent members of the audience reaches its climax. Here the ancestors and the fallen become one; sacrifice and enlargement are melded together. Properly speaking, the ancestors are the ones who added physical property to the polis, just as ἐκτήσαντο in this sentence looks back to κτησάμενοι in the programmatic 2.36.2. Again properly speaking, it is the fallen soldiers who gave up their lives as the κάλλιστος ἔρανος. But, distinguishing the two groups is here beside the point. The fallen and their forebears alike are joined together as one group in this passage because of the common trait they share of adding to the power and prestige of Athens, the fallen through their sacrifice, their forebears through their physical acquisitions. Here lies the reason the fallen deserve lavish praise. True, they died in the

⁶⁰⁰ Cf. Hornblower 1991: ad loc. For the various ways in which the λόγος/ἔργον antithesis can be present conceptually, even if not verbally, see Parry 1981: 10-14.

service of their country, but why is *that* laudable? Because it accords with the city's heritage.

The fallen are to be praised because they acted in accordance with the tradition of their ancestors, so that what was said of their ancestors can in a special, yet no less real, way be said of the fallen: κτησάμενοι γὰρ πρὸς οἷς ἐδέξαντο ὅσῃν ἔχομεν ἀρχὴν οὐκ ἀπόνως ἡμῖν τοῖς νῦν προσκατέλιπον.

The fallen are the true sons of their forebears. In behaving according to the same standards as those that made Athens what it is, they unite the past and the present and cast the current war against the Peloponnesians as an enterprise sanctioned by Athenians both living and dead. By this equation of the fallen with the past, Pericles makes it clear for his audience that the benevolent among them, those who expect lavish praise for the fallen, are the ones who hold what is by far the stronger logos, the logos perfectly synchronized with the Athenian ethicality. But such an equation, being by and large celebratory, only serves to confirm those who already held that opinion. Pericles must still bring the envious, those who dissent from the stronger logos, round to this view, if the city is going to be rendered healthy. To do so, he must alter their disposition of envy and jealousy to a more constructive passion.

11.4 RE-DISPOSITIONING: FROM ENVY TO EMULATION

Thucydides reports that Pericles was quite expert at altering the disposition (ἔξις) of his audience from one state to its opposite. At 2.65.9 Thucydides says: ὁπότε γοῦν αἰσθοιτό τι αὐτοὺς παρὰ καιρὸν ὕβρει θαρσοῦντας, λέγων κατέπλησεν ἐπὶ τὸ φοβεῖσθαι, καὶ δεδιότας αὖ ἀλόγως ἀντικαθίστη πάλιν ἐπὶ τὸ θαρσεῖν. By the power of his speech (λέγων) Pericles was able, after diagnosis (ὁπότε αἰσθοιτο), to draw his audience from the state of confidence to its opposite,

fear; and from a state of fear to its opposite, confidence.⁶⁰¹ On another occasion, when in the summer of 430 BC the Athenians were desperate and angry because the Periclean policy of surrendering the countryside to the enemy seemed responsible for the outbreak of the plague in the city, Thucydides records that Pericles convened an assembly because he wanted to encourage them, take away their angry disposition (τὸ ὀργιζόμενον τῆς γνώμης) and bring them into a state of greater mildness and fearlessness (πρὸς τὸ ἡπιώτερον καὶ ἀδεέστερον καταστήσαι) (2.59.3).⁶⁰² Thucydides twice points out that Pericles' rhetorical ability had the feature of being able to change the Athenians' disposition *to its opposite*.⁶⁰³ Thus the historian suggests that Pericles' oratory was an exemplification of Protagorean "re-dispositioning."

Pericles employs this same technique in the funeral speech in order to convert those who dissent from the stronger logos. True to Protagoras' teachings, he addresses their disposition, not their opinion, since their opinion is not wrong, but could only be "better." They currently have a disposition of envy (φθόνος) towards the fallen. The reason they have such a disposition towards them, and anybody else who is praised, is because, as examples of Protagorean epistemology, they judge the ability of others by their own capacity (φύσις) (see subsection 8.1.1). Therefore, in order to alter this disposition towards the fallen, Pericles must first change their understanding of their φύσις. And, according to Protagoras's teaching, he must address it with either praise or censure. In the event, he chooses praise. The praise, though, is oblique. In the first six of a twelve-section speech (2.36 to 2.46), Pericles does not even discuss the fallen, but instead praises Athens and the Athenians as a whole. This is usually understood as a digression reflecting the

⁶⁰¹ For fear (φόβος) as the opposite of confidence (θάραχος), cf. Arist. *Rh.* 1383a13-16; Pl. *Prt.* 349e1-3.

⁶⁰² Cf. Arist. *Rh.* 1380a7, who contrasts anger (ὀργή) with gentleness (πραότης).

⁶⁰³ Contrast Gorgias' description of the power of speech to change mood, in which the audience is moved to random, not opposite, emotions (*Hel.* 14). Thrasymachus of Chalcedon (Pl. *Phdr.* 267c6-d1) claimed to have the power to transform the audience's mood to its opposite, and interestingly denoted it by κηλεῖν – the word Plato makes a point of attaching to Protagoras (see subsection 10.4.1).

agenda of Thucydides or as typical of the genre of the funeral speech.⁶⁰⁴ However, read in the light of Protagoras's rhetoric, it also performs an immediate rhetorical function. It contains a praise of Athens that is at one and the same time a praise of the dissenters. It is by this indirect praise that Pericles attempts to develop in them a higher estimation of their own capacity. Once they are equipped with this new self-estimation, Pericles can invite them to take up a new disposition regarding the fallen, to drop their disposition of envy (φθόνος) and adopt one of emulation (ζῆλος). If they do so, then the weaker logos, as in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, will surrender, toss his cloak, and join the ranks of those on the stronger side (cf. subsection 10.3.3).

11.4.1 The Exemplary Athenian

Self-sufficiency is the theme that enables Pericles to use his direct praise of Athens as an oblique praise of every Athenian individual.⁶⁰⁵ Athens, he begins, has been developed in all respects to an extremely high level of self-sufficiency for both war and peace (τὴν πόλιν τοῖς πᾶσι παρεσκευάσαμεν καὶ ἐς πόλεμον καὶ ἐς εἰρήνην αὐταρκεστάτην) (2.36.3). This self-sufficiency does not of course mean that Athens produces everything it needs within the confines of its own borders.⁶⁰⁶ Instead, it means Athens has access to every kind of resource – material, intellectual, cultural – needed in order to be equal to any challenge a political community can face. It thus serves as the defining characteristic of Athens. It is the essence of its greatness and has important implications on Athenian life (see subsection 8.2.2).

Breaking down Athens' self-sufficiency, Pericles explains how it reveals itself in the cultural (ἐπιτήδευσις), political (πολιτεία) and psychological life (τρόποι) of the Athenians

⁶⁰⁴ E.g. Rusten 1989: 19 and Loraux 1986: 174, respectively.

⁶⁰⁵ Foster 2010: 202-204 similarly sees self-sufficiency as the leitmotif of the speech, but emphasizes its material aspect. For the cultural aspect, see subsection 8.2.2.

⁶⁰⁶ Cf. Gomme 1956: ad loc.

(2.36.4). The Athenians, he explains, rule themselves in the true sense of the word, for their government is a democracy (2.37). They enjoy plenty of festivals and have access to products from around the known world (2.38). They are excellent soldiers, despite the fact that, unlike Sparta, they do not spend their lives in military barracks (2.39). They operate on a basis of circumspection and reason (2.40.1-2) (cf. subsection 9.4.2). Moreover, they are courageous in the correct sense of the word. In a definition quite possibly reminiscent of a Protagorean *topos*, Pericles asserts that one is truly courageous only when he has an accurate notion of what is frightful and what is desirable, yet chooses danger anyway (2.40.3).⁶⁰⁷ The Athenians are steadfast friends and allies, because they manage their relations, not on a basis of self-interest (τοῦ συμφέροντος), but in the confidence that their advocacy of democracy in the Greek world disposes their subjects and allies well towards them (2.40.4-5).⁶⁰⁸ Finally, at 2.41.1 Pericles sums up all these aspects of self-sufficiency in a statement that indicates how important he considers it to be to human society. Athens, he declares, teaches the other Greeks how to live (Ξυνελών τε λέγω τήν τε πᾶσαν πόλιν τῆς Ἑλλάδος παίδευσιν εἶναι). The theme begun with αὐταρκεστιάτη at 2.36.3 here reaches a milestone: Self-sufficiency makes Athens an example of political excellence to others. This is a grand(iose) claim that demands for Athens a seat of honor in human history.

⁶⁰⁷ This is most likely both a sophistic *topos*, as Antiphon (DK 87 B59) gives a similar definition of σωφροσύνη, and a specifically Protagorean one as well, since in the *Protagoras* he attempts to define ἀνδρεία along these lines (349e3), but is prevented by Socrates from developing that line of thought (359d1-4). For Protagoras's use of *topoi*, see Cic. *Brut.* 12.46 (= DK 80 B6). Cf. Kerferd 1981: 31.

⁶⁰⁸ So I interpret the dense phrase τῆς ἐλευθερίας τῷ πιστῷ. Gomme 1959: ad loc. renders it “with the confidence that belongs to us as free men.” But it seems more likely that the spread of democracy is here meant, since in the *Menexenus* – a parody of this speech – the spread of democracy is portrayed as the defense of freedom (ἐλευθερία) (242ab). This interpretation is also supported by the fact that Pericles in the next sentence declares Athens to be the education of Greece. For the *Menexenus* as a parody of the funeral speech featured in Thucydides, see Coventry 1989: 3.

Yet an even grander claim follows. In this same sentence Pericles makes a startling transition from Athens and the Athenians as a whole to the individual Athenian. After thus naming Athens as the education of Greece, he adds (2.41.1):

καὶ καθ' ἕκαστον δοκεῖν ἄν μοι τὸν αὐτὸν ἄνδρα παρ' ἡμῶν ἐπὶ πλεῖστ' ἄν εἶδη καὶ μετὰ χαρίτων μάλιστ' ἄν εὐτραπέλως τὸ σῶμα αὐταρκες παρέχεσθαι.

The transition is eloquent. It occurs in mid-sentence, executed by the conjunctions τε...καί which give it a certain naturalness. Athens is not only the education of Greece, but in individual terms *every* Athenian (καθ' ἕκαστον) is a citizen that is self-sufficient (αὐταρκες) for the greatest assortment of undertakings, with dexterity and with the greatest versatility. As the city, so every citizen. It is not just a grand claim; it is equality (ἰσονομία) taken literally. Since the city operates on a basis of self-rule, artistic energy, economic prosperity, military prowess, intellectual excellence and ethical integrity, it stands to reason, Pericles claims, that, not certain of the Athenians, but each and every one will possess these same qualities.⁶⁰⁹ These self-sufficient citizens are a tremendous historical phenomenon, miles away from the anonymous, obsequious subjects of the Persian Empire and the dogmatically obedient Spartans. They are self-actuated, free from all authority because they have learned to be their own authority. But action speaks louder than words, and to verify his assertion that Athens has indeed imparted to *each* of its citizens, living and dead, a generous portion of self-sufficiency, Pericles offers the most compelling proof (2.41.2):

καὶ ὥς οὐ λόγων ἐν τῷ παρόντι κόμπος τάδε μᾶλλον ἢ ἔργων ἐστὶν ἀλήθεια, αὐτὴ ἡ δύναμις τῆς πόλεως, ἣν ἀπὸ τῶνδε τῶν τρόπων ἐκτησάμεθα, σημαίνει.

That every Athenian has this existential self-sufficiency, that what Pericles claims for each Athenian, is true, that what he says is ἔργων ἀλήθεια, is proven by the city's power (δύναμις).

⁶⁰⁹ Pericles is thus making use of the traditional idea found in earlier literature that, in the words of Simonides, πόλις ἄνδρα διδάσκει (see subsection 8.2.2).

Every Athenian has self-sufficiency because the city has it; if the city did not have it, it would not have the *power* it incontrovertibly has. The declaration, more powerful than logical, rolls empire, city and the individual Athenian all into one.⁶¹⁰

But for whose sake? Just as in the case of the benevolent audience members the praise for the fallen looks back to the past and the dead for vindication, so now the praise of the fallen looks ahead to the living, to bring the present dissenters into line with the rest of the city, with the fallen soldiers, and with their own past. Pericles' aim is wholeness, complete integration of the discrete parts of the city.

11.4.2 Σώματα αὐτάρκη

Now that Pericles has established this relationship between city and individual, he can commence the eulogy proper over the fallen soldiers without fear of alienating the dissenters. The praise is lavish. In the face of death, these fallen soldiers counted present wealth, or hoped-for wealth, as nothing compared to the punishment of their enemies. They committed thoughts of success to the future and trusted in themselves for the present.⁶¹¹ Thus they overcame fear and perished at the height of glory (2.42.4). Their glory is ageless and will resonate across the globe (2.43.2). Hearing this eulogy one might think the heroes of Marathon were being interred. But, as Thucydides shows (2.18-33), the operations these soldiers were in were few, minor, and hardly call for such praise.⁶¹² One might explain this incongruity by alleging that this praise is not for these fallen soldiers themselves, but rather that they represent, or symbolize, the “collective dead over the years,” or “the meaning of the action of the men.”⁶¹³ Such an abstraction, though, is

⁶¹⁰ For the status of truth in this passage, cf. subsection 8.1.1.

⁶¹¹ Protagoras encouraged a similar attitude towards present and future time. See subsection 8.3.3.

⁶¹² See Bosworth 2000: 5-6 for details concerning these operations.

⁶¹³ For the former view, see Bosworth 2000: 5n21, for the latter Parry 1981: 169.

hard to reconcile with Pericles' express assertion that the record of *these men* (τῶνδε) is on par with their deeds: καὶ οὐκ ἂν πολλοῖς τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἰσόρροπος ὥσπερ τῶνδε ὁ λόγος τῶν ἔργων φανείη. It is also hard to reconcile with Pericles' fear that some might think his eulogy, as it in fact is, pleonastic (2.35.2). Pericles means the praise to be taken literally.

But, Pericles has prefaced this praise with a panegyric on Athens that claimed that the city's self-sufficiency is imparted to the individual Athenian. The fallen were able to perform so magnanimous a deed because they came from Athens. As Pericles says when summarizing the eulogy: Καὶ οἶδε μὲν προσηκόντως τῇ πόλει τοιοῖδε ἐγένοντο (2.43.1). In proving to be such as Pericles just described them, the fallen soldiers "match their city."⁶¹⁴ They are its products, shining examples of σώματα αὐτάκρη. The praise must be excessive if it is going to prove Pericles' claim which is the *crux* of the speech. For, it carries an important implication. If these men performed so grand a deed because their city trained them to have that kind of valor, then that kind of valor, or rather ἀρετή, is a condition determined by environment; and if it is such a condition, then the envious who are likewise products of Athens are also capable of such deeds. This being the case, they have misinterpreted their own capacity and so, according to Pericles' psychology, no longer have any reason to envy any imputation of heroism to the fallen. Thus Pericles challenges the self-estimation of the envious. If they would but realize that they too, as citizens of Athens, are σώματα αὐτάκρη, the praise would not seem effuse and fulsome to them, but, in Pericles' words, ἰσόρροπος.

True to Protagorean instruction, Pericles here attempts to remove the obstacle that stands in the way of the dissenters' belief in the praiseworthiness of the fallen, namely their low self-estimation. They continue of course to measure others by their own capacity. Protagorean epistemology has not been undermined or rejected. Only, a new perspective on themselves has

⁶¹⁴ Rusten 1989: ad loc.

been offered. This new perspective recalls the νόμος/φύσις antithesis that was becoming current at the time. The envious are asked to consider themselves possessors of a valor and ability similar to that in the fallen because all who are products of Athens are endowed with such ability, which is truly an ἀρετή (2.42.2). This belief in an imparted, environmentally conditioned ἀρετή is supposed to replace their earlier estimation of themselves which Pericles denotes as φύσις (2.35.2). The envious are thus asked to drop a view of themselves based on reality (φύσις) and adopt one based on the power of human custom. This νόμος/φύσις antithesis serves as reinforcement of the truth/human opinion antithesis that figured in the proem, in that a preference for custom over nature privileges Athenian opinion over universal truth. In Pericles' offer of a new perspective the envious are offered a new worldview, one less "physical" and, the language suggests, less "realistic" than their earlier one.

Now that the envious are thus offered a new way of thinking about themselves, viz. as products of a teacher-city, not as products of φύσις, Pericles can at last invite them to take up a new disposition towards the fallen. At the end of the eulogy of the fallen soldiers, he calls on the audience to emulate them (2.43.4):

οὓς νῦν ὑμεῖς ζηλώσαντες καὶ τὸ εὐδαιμον τὸ ἐλεύθερον, τὸ δ' ἐλεύθερον τὸ εὐψυχον
κρίναντες μὴ περιορᾶσθε τοὺς πολεμικοὺς κινδύνους.

It is an emphatic moment in the speech. Not only is it the first time the historical context (i.e. the Peloponnesian War) is referred to directly, but it is also the first time the second person plural occurs in the speech.⁶¹⁵ The audience now hears Pericles address them directly for the first time, and with a verb in the imperative mood. It also begins with an extended sequence of nine long syllables, so that the point is audibly "hammered home." And what is that point? They are

⁶¹⁵ Pericles might have used the second person at 41.5 and at 43.1, but instead avoids it with the generic πᾶς τις and οἱ λοιποί.

invited to take up the disposition directly opposite to envy (φθόνος),⁶¹⁶ namely emulous admiration (ζῆλος) through the participle ζηλώσαντες. The reference to the war, the direct address, the spondaic delivery all combine to make the invitation to emulate, not envy, a moment of truth. Will the envious accept Pericles' invitation?

Near the peroration of the speech, when encouraging the male relatives of the dead to duplicate their virtue and valor, Pericles notes that in imitating the fallen they have a rough road ahead of them, since (2.45.1):

Φθόνος γὰρ τοῖς ζῶσι πρὸς τὸ ἀντίπαλον, τὸ δὲ μὴ ἐμποδῶν ἀνανταγωνίστῳ εὐνοία
τετίμηται.

It has been pointed out that this line is inconsistent with Pericles' psychology of envy in the proem (2.35.2), since there it is possible to bear envy against the dead, while here the dead are exempt from such malice.⁶¹⁷ While it is contradictory, it is not necessarily inconsistent from the viewpoint of a change of disposition. From the beginning Pericles has endeavored to place the fallen soldiers above envy by suggesting that the living are just as *capable* as they. He now assumes the fallen are indeed above φθόνος, subject only to ζῆλος. In other words, though it is not made clear if Pericles' invitation was accepted, Pericles is inclined to think it has been.

11.5 THE HEALTHY CITY?

Whether or not they accepted the invitation, Pericles' rhetorical aim is clear. After articulating a rhetorical approach that assumed Protagorean relativism, he then went about executing that approach through the implementation of Protagorean rhetorical technique. He attempted to re-disposition the envious portion of his audience so as to harmonize them with the consensus view

⁶¹⁶ For envy and its opposite, see above, n557.

⁶¹⁷ Cf. Gomme 1956: ad loc, Rusten 1989: ad loc.

and create *ὁμόνοια* in the city. In order to effect this re-dispositioning and create this *ὁμόνοια*, he first determined what the consensus view was. He then vindicated that view by showing that the fallen soldiers were the true sons of their forebears. Next, he assessed the reason why the envious audience members disagreed with that view and finding it to be envy, based on a low (or realistic?) self-estimation, he so praised Athens as to include the envious citizens in that praise and challenge their low self-estimation. Then – and only then – did he encourage them to adopt an attitude of emulation towards the fallen. In this way he made, is suggest, the weaker logos the stronger.

And since Protagoras characterized the process of making the weaker logos the stronger as a transforming of a sick view into the healthy view, Pericles can be said to offer the city a “health-giving” speech. However, within a few lines Thucydides describes the terrible plague that struck Athens shortly after the funeral speech was delivered. A metaphorical, Protagorean “healthiness” that Pericles offers the city is thus juxtaposed with the actual, virulent disease which kills many, Pericles himself included. Why Thucydides created this juxtaposition will be discussed in the following chapter.

12.0 THE DISABUSED CITY: THE FUNCTION OF THE PROTAGOREAN DIMENSION IN THUCYDIDES' *HISTORY*

In chapters eight through eleven I argue that Protagorean ideas figure in the funeral speech delivered by Pericles in the *History* of Thucydides. That claim must now deal with a crucial question: Why? What purpose did Thucydides intend to achieve by incorporating into the Periclean funeral speech ideas drawn from the political and rhetorical teachings of Protagoras? What role did he intend this Protagorean dimension to play *in the work*? One answer is that it was in the interests of historicity. Thucydides made use of Protagorean elements because he had either first- or second-hand knowledge that these ideas were to an extent expressed on that occasion (section 11.0). However, historicity does not give a complete answer, since these ideas help give to the funeral speech an overall egalitarian character that interacts in provocative ways with other parts of the *History*. The question then remains effectively unresolved.

It is this question that I plan to discuss in this chapter. After examining how the egalitarian character of the funeral speech stands in stark contrast to other passages in Thucydides in which the Athenian political philosophy appears to be a more or less aggressive form of Realism, I will suggest that the plague narrative that immediately follows the funeral speech depicts the total victory of Realism over the ideals of the funeral speech as the dominant theory in Athenian political culture. Moreover, I will argue that for Thucydides a crucial, if not the most crucial, factor in the final takeover of Realism was, ironically enough, the very Protagorean assumptions that formed the basis of the rival egalitarian theory of the funeral

speech. These assumptions, Thucydides' narrative implies, had placed the Athenian mind at such a distance from reality and sound thinking that in a crisis situation such as the plague these Protagorean assumptions not only discredited themselves, but also made the Athenians hyper-sensitive to the exigencies of reality, a hyper-sensitivity that expressed itself in the espousal of Realist politics which influence Athenian behavior in significant episodes later in the war. Thus, Protagorean ideas that informed the democratic ideals of the funeral speech paradoxically become the cause for the abandonment of those same ideals. The historiographical function then of the Protagorean dimension in the funeral speech is two-fold: It explains the Athenian intellectual development in the first years of the war and offers this intellectual development as another facet in the historical causation of the Peloponnesian War.

12.1 REALISM

There is an incongruity between the funeral speech and the characterization of the Athenian political ideology represented elsewhere in the *History*. This political ideology is, in a word, Realism.⁶¹⁸ As the Athenian legates tell the representatives of the Melians in Bk 5:

...δίκαια μὲν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρωπείῳ λόγῳ ἀπὸ τῆς ἴσης ἀνάγκης κρίνεται, δυνατὰ δὲ οἱ προύχοντες πράσσουσι καὶ οἱ ἀσθενεῖς ξυγχωροῦσιν (89).

The terms of a relationship between a strong party and a weak party are to be determined, not by considerations of justice and fair dealing (δίκαια), but by the realities of power (δυνατά). The strong has a *right* to rule the weak simply because he has the *power* to do so. Might is right, and justice is an idea that is only valid between parties equal in power (in which case it ceases to be

⁶¹⁸ For the equation of the Athenian ideology with the Realist school of International Relations Theory, see Ober 2009: 434-438. The emphasis that Plato places on this school of thought through Thrasymachus in the *Republic* (343b1-344c8) and Callicles in the *Gorgias* (482c4-492c8) suggests that it was a matter of discussion both in Plato's time and in the mid fifth century.

justice *per se* and becomes merely a special application of the law of the stronger). Nor is this simply a pragmatic approach the Athenians take, but rather it achieves the status of dogma through an appeal to “the nature of things” (φύσις). As they later explain to the Melians:

ἡγοῦμεθα γὰρ τό τε θεῖον δόξη τὸ ἀνθρώπειόν τε σαφῶς διὰ παντὸς ὑπὸ φύσεως ἀναγκαίᾳς, οὗ ἂν κρατῇ, ἄρχειν· καὶ ἡμεῖς οὔτε **θέντες** τὸν νόμον οὔτε **κειμένῳ** πρῶτοι χρησάμενοι, **ὄντα** δὲ παραλαβόντες καὶ ἐσόμενον ἐς αἰεὶ καταλείποντες χρώμεθα αὐτῷ... (5.105.2).

The word ὄντα, with its philosophical connotations of real being,⁶¹⁹ makes their point clear. The law of the stronger is here sanctioned by an appeal to natural law, independent of all human law, which, the language indicates, is merely convention (θέντες, κειμένῳ). The Athenians here are avowed Realists.

12.1.1 The Emissaries’ Speech at Sparta

Nor is this ideology the result of the Peloponnesian War. Thucydides makes it clear that before the war began certain Athenians had already espoused this political philosophy.⁶²⁰ At the meeting of the Peloponnesian allies that was convened at Sparta in 432 BC to discuss whether or not the league should declare war against Athens, Athenian emissaries who happened to be at Sparta on other business managed to gain permission to speak, not to answer any charges (this they make abundantly clear), but simply to impress upon the Spartans what was at stake (1.73-

⁶¹⁹ The connotation of reality, or being, which this word obviously has makes adverbs such as ὄντως, τῷ ὄντι, possible. For this same reason it makes Hornblower’s view (see below, n582), that the Athenians here do not base their appeal on nature, but on history, difficult to support, since the participle raises the essence of the law to a higher plane of being and thus associates the Athenians’ appeal with what Hussey 1985: 128 calls “the latest sophistic theories.” Cf. Tritle 2006: 485-486.

⁶²⁰ Cf. Gomme, Andrewes, Dover 1970: 174-175; Stahl 2003: 48; Strasburger 2009: 205n44, 215, 217; Foster 2010: 90n21. Hornblower 1987: 185-1866 & n99 and 1991: 121-122 contends that the rationales presented in the emissaries’ speech and the Melian dialogue are close to, but essentially different from, a Realist philosophy. Instead, he argues both parties appeal to the “truths of history,” not a law of nature, and points to καθεστῶτος (established custom) in the former passage (1.76.2) and νόμος (=custom) in the latter (5.105.2). But see n581 above and n583 below.

78). In the course of this speech the Athenian speaker appeals to the same *natural* law of the stronger in order to explain (not justify) their empire, as well as their management of it:

οὕτως οὐδ' ἡμεῖς θαυμαστὸν οὐδὲν πεποιήκαμεν οὐδ' **ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου τρόπου**, εἰ ἀρχὴν τε διδομένην ἐδεξάμεθα καὶ ταύτην μὴ ἀνεῖμεν ὑπὸ <τριῶν> τῶν μεγίστων νικηθέντες, τιμῆς καὶ δέους καὶ ὠφελίας, οὐδ' αὖ πρῶτοι τοῦ τοιούτου ὑπάρξαντες, ἀλλ' αἰεὶ **καθεστῶτος** τὸν ἥσσω ὑπὸ τοῦ **δυνατωτέρου** κατείργεσθαι...(1.76.2).

The similarity of this passage with the Melian dialogue is clear. The primary factor in a relationship with a weaker party is power (δυνατωτέρου). This is a principle that is not man-made, but established as a condition of reality (καθεστῶτος)⁶²¹ and in keeping with human sociology (τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου τρόπου). Moreover, the speaker makes it clear that he does not think justice is in any way an obligation owed to the weaker by the stronger. True, he goes on to point out that the Athenians behave moderately towards their subjects (μετριάζομεν) (1.76.3); but he makes it clear that, if the Athenians dispensed with Law⁶²² and openly aggrandized (ἐπλεονεκτοῦμεν), not even the subjects themselves would deny that the weaker must submit to the one with the power:

ἐκείνως δ' οὐδ' ἂν αὐτοὶ ἀντέλεγον ὥς οὐ χρεῶν τὸν ἥσσω τῷ κρατοῦντι ὑποχωρεῖν (1.77.3).

The moderation the Athenians show is for their subjects a matter of luck. The Athenians have the right (provided it is defined as might) to treat their subjects as they wish; the fact that they don't is not because they believe moderation to have a legitimate place in human ethics. This comes out clearly when the speaker says that the subjects should be thankful that they are not deprived

⁶²¹ καθεστῶτος governs the indirect statement τὸν ἥσσω ὑπὸ τοῦ δυνατωτέρου κατείργεσθαι. Just below (1.76.3) the speaker mentions τῇ ἀνθρωπείᾳ φύσει and explains it by adding ὥστε ἐτέρων ἄρχειν. This parallel suggests that καθεστῶτος is φύσις and *vice versa*. In other words, the speaker is, *contra* Hornblower (see above, n582), appealing to natural, not historical, truths.

⁶²² Gomme 1965: ad loc notes: "a rare use of the singular in the sense of Law, as opposed to violence..." The Athenian speaker is speaking abstractly and on a theoretical plane.

of more (οὐ τοῦ πλεονος μὴ στερισκόμενοι χάριν ἔχουσιν). For, generally speaking, one need not be thankful when another treats him as he ethically ought.

Rather, the reason they are moderate is because moderation is currently in their interests.⁶²³ Here the emissary does not just resemble the Athenian speaker on Melos, but offers a further elaboration in the Realist philosophy they share. He provides the corollary to the law of the stronger; namely, self-interest (τὰ ζυμφέροντα). He begins by assuming the legitimacy of self-interest in a special case:

παῖσι δὲ ἀνεπίφθονον τὰ ζυμφέροντα τῶν μεγίστων πέρι κινδύνων εὖ τίθεσθαι (1.75.5).

When it comes to the gravest dangers, one can be forgiven if he arranges affairs with a view to expediency. Self-interest is soon, however, raised to the status of a general principle when the speaker accuses the Spartans of following the same philosophy under the pretense of the cause of justice (ὁ δίκαιος λόγος) and avers that that cause is one to which “nobody ever gave preference, and forbore to gain more (πλέον ἔχειν), when he had the chance to make some acquisition in strength” (1.76.2). Such generalizing shows that self-interest has the status of an ethical standard for the emissaries.

Moreover, the Athenian speaker gives further definition to the tenets of this Realist philosophy when he consistently explains self-interest as “having more” (πλεονεκτεῖν). This is demonstrated not only in the two instances of the word already cited, but also when he refers to the grievances of the allies as summed up in the single word πλεονεκτεῖσθαι (1.77.4).

Thus, as analysis of the emissaries’ speech at Sparta shows, Thucydides indicates that already before the war certain Athenians were following Realist theory and that that theory was already worked out and elaborated to a great extent in its justification of aggression as the right of the stronger and its equation of self-interest as gain involving loss for one’s enemy. Just who

⁶²³ Cf. 5.111.4.

these Athenians were, Thucydides does not say.⁶²⁴ It is interesting that, where this philosophy occurs most (here and in the Melian dialogue), the speakers are denoted broadly as “Athenians,” as if Thucydides were emphasizing ideas and schools of thought over individuals.⁶²⁵

12.1.2 An Athens Divided

The similarity then between the Athenians at Melos and the Athenians at Sparta suggests that from the beginning of the *History* the Athenians espoused a Realist political philosophy. But on this view a problem emerges when this depiction of the Athenian political philosophy is set beside the one expressed by Pericles in the funeral oration. As I have attempted to show, in this speech Pericles neither advocates the law of the stronger nor recommends the calculus of self-interest and gain as standards to govern human interaction, but instead employs Protagorean theory in order to characterize Athens in nearly utopian terms. It is a place where a perfect consensus organically creates a culture of equality and freedom for city and individual alike. This egalitarian theory is the diametrical opposite of Realist philosophy. In the Athens of the funeral speech the danger of self-interest is moot, since corporate interest is not something that can be determined by objective criteria, but is simply the greatest common denominator of individual interests (subsection 9.1.1). Nor does the law of the stronger have any validity, since the Athenian citizens are *by nature* equal in ability, one being only *by convention* more proficient than another (subsections 5.4.3, 9.2.2). This utopia of freedom and equality is the negation of a

⁶²⁴ Raubitschek 1973: 33-34 contends that this embassy was the one including Anthemocritus and initiated by Pericles (see Plu. *Per.* 30.2-3) in order to explain to the Spartans the recently decreed embargo against Megara. However, Stadter 1989: 274-276 is surely right when he points out that the Anthemocritus embassy preceded, and is meant by Plutarch to account for, the Megarian decree. There is therefore no reason to link the two embassies.

⁶²⁵ According to West's description of the speeches in Thucydides (1973:7-15), besides these two passages, the brief reply to the Corinthian herald after Sybota (1.53.4) is the only other place where the *direct* speech of unidentified Athenians is given.

Realist ideology. Nor does gain (πλεονεκτεῖν) ever come in for mention, but on the contrary is expressly disavowed. At 2.40.5 Pericles declares that:

καὶ μόνοι οὐ τοῦ ξυμφέροντος μᾶλλον λογισμῷ ἢ τῆς ἐλευθερίας τῷ πιστῷ ἀδεῶς τινὰ ὠφελοῦμεν.

The altruism of the passage comes through more in the word ὠφελοῦμεν than in the phrase οὐ τοῦ ξυμφέροντος (although it is there, too). Not only do the Athenians not help others for the purpose of serving their own interests, but, the idea of helping is expressed with ὠφελέω, a word that recalls the principle of self-interest and gain in the emissaries' speech at Sparta,⁶²⁶ and recalling, rejects. Thus, according to Pericles, the "help" they render has a very selfless connotation: They actually serve the self-interests of others! The emissaries cite ὠφελία (along with τιμή and δέος) as a reason for the empire; Pericles now asserts Athens is committed to the cause of ὠφελία to others. This sample passage is a perfect example of the Realism of the emissaries' speech and the commitment to freedom and equality in the funeral oration.

The result is an Athens divided. Thucydides appears to be pointing out that one and the same city at one and the same time espouses two diametrically opposite political philosophies. This situation presents quite a dilemma in a history, since an historian treats a state-actor's political philosophy in order to discover the ethical, intellectual, social and cultural motivations that drive it. If, however, a state-actor's political assumptions are so intellectually divided and inconsistent, insight into historical causation in that instance must remain blocked.

12.2 THE PLAGUE NARRATIVE

Unless there's a point to the contradiction. And in this instance there is a suggestion that Thucydides has a point. Immediately after the funeral speech there follows the description of the

⁶²⁶ The emissary uses a form of the word at least seven times: 1.73.2 (twice), 74.1, 74.3, 75.3, 76.1, 76.2.

plague that struck Athens in the archon year of 430/29 BC, and there are several indications that the plague narrative is meant to provide commentary on the funeral oration. The first is the fact that when at the end of the funeral speech Thucydides notes the closing of the year he uncharacteristically omits his “signature,” that phrase indicating that Thucydides is the author of what is being read. This suggests the two parts, oration and plague, are to be read together.⁶²⁷

Another is the fact that Thucydides clearly considers the plague to be one of the most momentous occurrences during the war. At 1.23 he gives the reason why the Peloponnesian War deserves more attention than the Persian Wars. Briefly stated, it brought more sufferings. He then enumerates those sufferings, beginning with the number of cities desolated, then proceeds by crescendo through exiles and murders, earthquakes and solar eclipses, droughts and famines, until he reaches the climax with the plague, ἡ οὐχ ἥκιστα βλάψασα καὶ μέρος τι φθείραςα ἡ λοιμώδης νόσος (1.23.3).⁶²⁸ Again, when he introduces the plague in Bk 2, he makes the astonishing claim that no greater plague was on record as happening in human history.⁶²⁹ In light of the weight Thucydides evidently gives the plague, it is reasonable to expect it to comment on more than just factual points.⁶³⁰

Another suggestion that the plague narrative cooperates with the funeral speech is the fact that, placed side by side as they are, they create two unsettling juxtapositions. The first pertains to the funerary theme. One of the saddest pictures the plague narrative presents is the Athenians’ abandonment of customary funeral practices and their disposing of the bodies of their relatives by furtively appropriating another’s pyre or openly throwing a body onto one already in use

⁶²⁷ Cf. Canfora 2006: 29-30. For a connection of the emissaries’ speech with the funeral oration, see Crane 1998: 271-272, who points out that the emissaries’ speech gives at 1.73.2 to 74.4 the synopsis of Athenian history that funeral orations typically give.

⁶²⁸ Parry 1969: 116: “...the nine words that intervene between the first article ἡ and its noun probably set a syntactical record.”

⁶²⁹ See Parry 1969: 114 for an exemplary discussion of the poetic effect of this passage.

⁶³⁰ Cf. Woodman 1988: 29-30, 36-37.

(2.52.4). On that same note, Thucydides also tells how the Athenians simply grew tired of giving their family members their due lamentation (αἱ ὀλοφύρσεις) (2.51.5). This lugubrious situation stands in stark contrast, not only to the occasion of the funeral speech, where city heroes are ceremoniously inhumed (2.34), but also to the final words of Pericles, who bids the audience to depart after lamenting in full each his relative (ἀπολοφυρόμενοι) (2.46.2).⁶³¹ Such a contrast invites comparison.⁶³²

The second juxtaposition is that which results from Pericles' deployment of Protagorean rhetorical teachings in the speech itself. Those teachings aimed at rendering a "sick" dissident "healthy" by integrating him into the outlook of his political environment (see subsections 10.1.2 and 10.1.3). In deploying this health-giving rhetoric in the funeral speech, Pericles in effect attempts to render Athens healthy on the eve of what Thucydides stresses to be the single greatest epidemic in human history. Rhetorical health and actual disease are juxtaposed. This provocative structure suggests that a single theme unites the speech and the plague narrative and, moreover, implies that that theme will address issues as fundamental as thought and reality, and seeming and being.

12.2.1 Previous Interpretations

Following the lead of similar juxtapositions, several scholars have suggested that the plague narrative subverts in one way or another the funeral speech. Hans-Peter Stahl sees it as a "test case" for Pericles' rationalistic view that he has armed himself against all possible contingencies. In the funeral oration, Stahl begins, Pericles represents the Athenians as driven by reason. The plague, however, brings on sufferings that put pressure on human nature (ἀνθρωπεῖα φύσις) to

⁶³¹ The fact that this tag in funeral orations was formulaic (see Ziolkowski 1981: 165-166) would mean an even easier recall for the reader.

⁶³² Cf. Allison 1983: 14; Connor 1984: 63-64.

the point that the Athenians substitute moral subjectivity for piety and illogicality for rationality. Though Pericles was aware that such a change was possible, it still has one unpredictable result: The Athenians adopt extremely egoistic behavior which cannot be restrained by Pericles and which proceeds to become a crucial factor in the eventual defeat of Athens. Thus, Stahl argues, Pericles' confidence in rational prognostication of future eventualities proves mistaken.⁶³³

Edith Foster argues "the plague narrative refuses both Pericles' claims about Athens and the language and attitude with which he makes those claims."⁶³⁴ Specifically, she sees in Pericles' reference to *σῶμα αὐτάρκες* in the funeral oration a claim of Athens to immunity against material deterioration. When, however, Thucydides reports in similar language that during the plague no *body* proved self-sufficient against it, she considers that claim to be undermined.⁶³⁵

Others have regarded it not so much as a subversion of ideas expressed in the funeral speech, but as a challenge. Adam Parry, after arguing that the plague narrative is cast in poetic language against what he calls the optimistic school which prefers to see the plague narrative as a specimen of scientific writing meant to help future generations, concludes that Thucydides depicts the plague as an attack on "the plans and constructions of men" expressed in the funeral speech, "the strongest assertion of the power of the mind to control the world," an attack whose success Thucydides leaves undecided.⁶³⁶ Similarly, A. J. Woodman argues that the plague narrative is a piece of rhetorical exaggeration intended to "overturn" noble claims Pericles expresses in the funeral speech, not in order to expose any problem with Pericles' claims, whom

⁶³³ 2003: 76-80.

⁶³⁴ 2010: 206. Similarly, Macleod 1983: 151-152.

⁶³⁵ Ibid. 205.

⁶³⁶ 1969: 116.

he regards as vindicated in the end, but solely for dramatic effect.⁶³⁷ “The historian has presented his readers with a dramatic reversal (περιπέτεια), like that of a tragedy.”⁶³⁸

12.2.2 An Alternative Interpretation

Despite the differences in their arguments, all four of the interpretations above regard the plague narrative as somehow cooperating with the funeral speech as either an authorial subversion or a serious challenge to claims made in the speech. In a similar way I will also argue that the plague narrative addresses issues from the funeral speech, but not as a subversion or a challenge, but as a *disabusal*. Specifically, I will attempt show that it depicts the point in time when the Athenians, under the pressure of war, experienced disaffection with a Protagorean-inspired political ideology and espoused in its place the Realism already advocated by certain Athenians. I will suggest moreover that Thucydides assigns a large part of the responsibility for this change to that same Protagorean-inspired ideology. Protagorean ideas gave the Athenians a distorted view of reality and human nature, and when that view had to be abandoned because terrible suffering forcefully disabused the Athenians of their distorted opinions, the ignorance of reality that these ideas bred in them caused them to overcompensate in the direction of a rigorous Realism. This experience entails a good degree of irony: The Athenians proved intellectually unprepared precisely because they adhered to a doctrine of complete intellectual self-sufficiency.

12.3 THE DISABUSAL OF A DISTORTED VIEW

The way in which the plague narrative depicts the Athenians’ loss of confidence in Protagorean assumptions becomes clear when one sets the general import which the funeral speech expresses

⁶³⁷ 1988: 32-40.

⁶³⁸ Ibid. 35.

regarding human nature and society against key passages in the plague narrative. Such a comparison reveals an interplay between narrative and speech that dramatizes how the Athenians were compelled by the undeniable force of reality to abandon their (noble?) ideals and acquiesce in a realistic, and Realist, worldview because those ideals were founded upon a flimsy denial of reality.

12.3.1 Self-determinism

As discussed in chapters eight and nine, the funeral speech develops themes the cumulative effect of which is the democratic manifesto that the individual is a complete, self-contained physical, intellectual and ethical unit, the measure of all that is and all that is not. This idea is first reflected in what is in effect the leitmotif of the speech: Self-sufficiency (or autarky).⁶³⁹ Pericles undertakes in the proem to show the many ways in which Athens is most self-sufficient (αὐταρκεστάτη) in both war and peace (2.36.3-4). He then proceeds to describe Athenian leadership, society, law, and decision-making in order to demonstrate how Athenian political culture respects and even encourages individual self-sufficiency (subsection 8.2.2).

As far as leadership is concerned, the Athenian citizen can be said to rule himself corporately. In order to make this point, Pericles represents the system by which citizens are placed in office to be based on the approbation of one's peers (subsection 9.2.1). The social life, moreover, is characterized by a genuine sense of friendship. They enjoy a real same-mindedness that arises organically from the citizen body and is not deliberately maintained by law (subsection 9.3.1). Similarly, the secret to the Athenians' law-abidingness is because the laws, denoted in the polar expression of δίκη (ᾠδικομένων) and αἰσχύνη, are the products of the

⁶³⁹ Similarly Foster 2010: 202-204, who however concentrates on Athens' *material* self-sufficiency to the exclusion of its intellectual and cultural aspects.

individual opinions combined in consensus, not the decrees of monarchs or oligarchs (subsection 9.3.2). Pericles' description of decision-making tends towards the same point. It is crucial that all citizens take part in the decision-making process; otherwise, the decisions reached will be fundamentally flawed and in effect cannot be called by definition "decisions" (subsection 9.4.2).

In short, the idea of self-sufficiency runs through all of these categories covered by Pericles as the single most important condition that all the political and social institutions of Athens meet. It is the *credo* about the individual that has determined the shape of Athenian government. What is more, there is a symbiosis. Just as the idea of self-sufficiency has conditioned Athenian institutions, so these same institutions in turn encourage self-sufficiency in the citizens. This is an important idea, if not *the* most important. Athens has reconciled the demands of the self-sufficient individual with the exigencies of community life (cf. subsection 9.4.2). If the individual is self-sufficient, how can he live in a community without compromising some portion of that self-sufficiency? The genius of Athens, Pericles implies, is that it has found an answer to that question. The institutions and way of life he describes show that Athens has discovered how the individual can be incorporated into community without compromising his own reading of reality.⁶⁴⁰ Those institutions and way of life are, in a word, democracy. Democracy enables the human individual's natural self-sufficiency (subsection 8.2.2).

These weighty ideas account for the climax that self-sufficiency as the leitmotif finally reaches when Pericles declares Athens to be the model of civilization for Greece and the individual Athenian to be an entity sufficient in himself for almost any challenge reality can present (2.41.1).⁶⁴¹ These words have universal and specific implications. On the one hand, they extol Athens as a high watermark in human history (subsection 8.2.2). On the other, they affirm,

⁶⁴⁰ Cf. Connor's remarks on the public/private theme (1984: 68-69).

⁶⁴¹ "In the Funeral Oration the sense [of *σῶμα αὐτάρκης*] is extended almost to "self-realization, self-fulfillment" (Connor 1984: 67n39). Cf. Loraux 1986: 153-154.

and rhetorically invite the Athenians to believe, that they are σώματα αὐτάρκη: Autonomous, self-fulfilling individuals who can corporately (thanks to Athens) determine their physical, ethical and intellectual environment (subsections 8.2.2, 11.4.1 and 11.4.2). Nature made them measures of all things, Athens respects nature's order. The funeral speech thus presents a theoretical formulation of the Athenian democracy that finds justification for that democracy in its respect and encouragement of a particularly radical version of individual self-determinism that privileges the individual's perception of reality over any claims to an objective reality.

It is this radical self-determinism that is directly challenged in the effects of the plague. Protagorean ideas that the Athenians have adopted about human ingenuity, about the relation of the human will to external reality, about reality itself, and about the status of human custom/law (νόμος) become discredited in the eyes of the suffering Athenians. In their distress they are compelled to abandon the fantasy their politicized relativism created and confront a cold, hard, and shared reality which, had their worldview been more realistic to begin with, would not have had the devastating effect it will prove to have. As it is, they confronted it when they were intellectually "sick," and the health Pericles' rhetoric had tried to impart only serves to set off in sad irony their actual sickness, in both its intellectual and physical forms.

12.3.2 Loss of Confidence in Human Ingenuity

The register of the language is noticeably high.⁶⁴² The first effect of the plague that Thucydides singles out by placing it in his introduction to the plague narrative is the fact that the Athenians lost confidence in τέχνη:

οὔτε γὰρ ἰατροὶ ἤρκουν τὸ πρῶτον θεραπεύοντες ἀγνοία, ἀλλ' αὐτοὶ μάλιστα ἐθνησκον ὅσω καὶ μάλιστα προσῆσαν, οὔτε ἄλλη ἀνθρωπεῖα τέχνη οὐδεμία· ὅσα τε πρὸς ἱεροῖς

⁶⁴² E.g. Thucydides omits ἀπό- in the primary tenses of θνήσκω here, and as a matter of fact almost consistently in the plague narrative, elsewhere in the *History* including it. Cf. Parry 1969:115.

ἰκέτευσαν ἢ μαντείοις καὶ τοῖς τοιούτοις ἐχρήσαντο, πάντα ἀνωφελῆ ἦν, τελευτῶντές τε αὐτῶν ἀπέστησαν ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ νικώμενοι (2.47.4).

The Athenians finally stop resisting and surrender themselves to the plague because, in addition to the silence of the gods, their best ingenuity, medical or otherwise, was insufficient against it. Here occurs the first allusion in the plague narrative to the Protagoreanism in the Athenian political culture. Protagoras had founded his notion of the self-sufficient human on the premise that the original humans were Promethean; that is, the individual had an innate intelligence that gave him a material self-sufficiency (αὐτάρκεια) in his original state. As he explains in the myth Plato composed for him, the δημιουργικὴ τέχνη that Prometheus took from Hephaestus and Athena and gave to humankind enabled them to meet virtually all their needs; the one need their τέχνη could not meet, security against the beasts, was not important enough for them to compromise their autarky by living in artificially united cities (section 4.1, subsection 8.2.1). Thus their ingenuity, their τέχνη, was the essential component to the self-sufficiency that Protagoras regards as the defining feature of humanity. Moreover, it is this same self-sufficiency that serves as the basis of Pericles' praise and description of Athens in the funeral speech. Here, however, Thucydides signifies that this basic tenet of Protagorean philosophy and Periclean rhetoric was refuted when he raises the discussion to abstract terms by speaking, not of Athenian ingenuity, but human (ἄνθρωπεῖα) ingenuity, and observes that that ingenuity was insufficient (ἀρκέω). Thus the Athenians experience the first challenge to their ideology. The gift of Hephaestus and Athena⁶⁴³ might not offer as much control over their world as they previous thought.

⁶⁴³ For the significance of these two gods to Athenian identity, see subsection 3.3.1.

12.3.3 Loss of Perception

In this same passage Thucydides refers to the disease in a military metaphor when he describes the Athenians as “suffering defeat at the hands of the evil” (ὕπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ νικώμενοι).⁶⁴⁴ This metaphor runs throughout the narrative, being repeated at 2.51.5 with a modification (ὕπὸ τοῦ πολλοῦ κακοῦ νικώμενοι) and intensified at 2.52.3 in the genitive absolute ὑπερβιαζομένου τοῦ κακοῦ.⁶⁴⁵ This metaphor is not only a pathetic reminder for the reader that an actual war is currently being waged, but also indicates the extreme force and pressure the Athenians are under – a pressure compounded by the war outside. This pressure eventually causes severe psychological trauma. As he observes at the end, and so climax, of his description of symptoms,

Τοὺς δὲ καὶ λήθη ἐλάμβανε παραντίκα ἀναστάντας τῶν πάντων ὁμοίως, καὶ ἡγνόησαν σφᾶς τε αὐτοὺς καὶ τοὺς ἐπιτηδείους. **γενόμενον γὰρ κρεῖσσον λόγου τὸ εἶδος** τῆς νόσου τά τε ἄλλα χαλεπωτέρως ἢ **κατὰ τὴν ἀνθρωπείαν φύσιν** προσέπιπτεν ἐκάστω...(2.49.8 – 50.1).

Certain Athenians upon recuperating actually experienced amnesia involving ignorance of both themselves and their close friends. The reason (γάρ) is that the form of the disease attacked (προσέπιπτεν)⁶⁴⁶ each person with distress greater than his capacity as a human could handle to the point of depriving him of the ability to meet that basic tenet of traditional Greek wisdom: γνῶθι σαυτόν. Here Thucydides treats what he considers to be the most significant symptom. Something in the physical world deprived Athenians, *qua* humans (ἡ ἀνθρωπεία φύσις), of their capacity for basic knowledge and recognition. Their trauma reverses Protagoras’ doctrine that the physical world was contingent upon the perception of the individual. Protagoras had said that if the wind is cold for one and warm for another, it is indeed cold for the former and warm for

⁶⁴⁴ For other military terms, see Parry 1969: 116.

⁶⁴⁵ Parry 1969: 115: “The verb ὑπερβιάζεσθαι...is in effect a ἄπαξ λεγόμενον: it does not appear again in Greek until Josephus uses the identical phrase...and then in the Thucydidean imitator Procopius.”

⁶⁴⁶ More military language (LSJ I.2).

the latter (*Tht.* 152a-b8). Thucydides now describes an effect of the plague that cripples their perceptions. They perceive, but the perception means nothing because there is no recognition. The Athenians thus experience firsthand the primacy of the object perceived over the perceiver. They see, Thucydides implies, that physical, historical occurrences are the things by which the world, and man, is measured.

The language of the passage lends supports to this reading. As discussed in chapter ten, Protagoras' claim to "make the weaker logos the stronger" (τὸν ἥττω λόγον κρείττω ποιεῖν) represented a technique he developed as a means of negotiating between discrepant assessments of reality by securing genuine agreement, for instance, from the individual who thought the wind was warm that it was in fact cold (section 10.2). Here Thucydides observes that the form (εἶδος) of the disease proved (γενόμενον) stronger (κρεῖσσον) "than an explanation" (λόγου).⁶⁴⁷ While denoting the "character" of the disease, εἶδος also connotes its "appearance" and thus enables the word to operate on a perceptual plane, which makes it odd company with its modifier γενόμενον (lit. "having become"). Appearance thus turns out actually *to be*. And it turns out to be stronger than any assessment one can make of it, either in word or in thought. The vehemence of the disease consisted in the fact that neither could the Athenians nor can anybody else form an assessment of the disease that will express its actual character. Far from being able to form a Protagorean κρείττων λόγος, Thucydides uses acrid paronomasia to claim the disease was too strong for the Athenians to form any λόγος whatsoever. Reality is not contingent upon perception; rather, it sometimes defies it. Thus the language suggests the Athenians experienced another challenge to the self-deterministic worldview Protagorean ideas encouraged. Nor does their experience reflect well on Pericles who had declared the Athenians to be self-sufficient for a great many "forms" (ἐπὶ πλεῖστ' ἂν εἶδη) (2.41.1). This εἶδος must be an exception.

⁶⁴⁷ So Rusten 1989: ad loc translates.

12.3.4 The Individual's Perception

Thucydides goes on in this same passage to say:

...καὶ ἐν τῷδε ἐδήλωσε μάλιστα ἄλλο τι ὄν ἢ τῶν ξυντρόφων τι· τὰ γὰρ ὄρνεα καὶ τετράποδα ὅσα ἀνθρώπων ἄπτεται, πολλῶν ἀτάφων γιγνομένων ἢ οὐ προσήει ἢ γευσάμενα διεφθείρετο (2.50.1).

He here makes the claim that the disease was not an instance of τῶν ξυντρόφων. The word choice is interesting. It is usually interpreted as roughly “ordinary.”⁶⁴⁸ But that scarcely does the word justice, as it clearly signifies an experience that was “raised and reared closely” with one because of either natural or circumstantial conditions.⁶⁴⁹ Thucydides denies then that the disease was anything “in close connection” with the human constitution, rather than anything of ordinary occurrence.⁶⁵⁰ That is why the point that the animals were susceptible to it is so significant. It was not one of those things that just belonged to humans.

This point is usually taken as a medical description.⁶⁵¹ However, it is just as possible to take ξύντροφος as referring to the human constitution in general, not strictly biological, terms. In this case Thucydides will be saying that the disease was not a thing closely connected with humans, but more universal. It is strange that Thucydides even bothers refuting the idea that the epidemic could have been peculiar to humans, as Greek tradition, at least Greek literary tradition, assumes epidemics typically cross species.⁶⁵² On the other hand, the idea of a disease “in close connection” with one (ξύντροφος) is quite similar to the Protagorean tenet that the perception one forms of a thing (φάντασμα) is the product of his disposition (ἔξις) (cf. subsection 6.1.2). As Protagoras interprets the education process in the *Theaetetus*:

⁶⁴⁸ Blanco 1998: 77. LSJ (I.3) suggests “everyday evils.”

⁶⁴⁹ LSJ I.1-3.

⁶⁵⁰ Cf. Thomas 2006: 102-103.

⁶⁵¹ E.g. most recently Thomas 2006: 102-103.

⁶⁵² E.g. Hom. *Il.* 1.43-52; S. *OT* 22-27.

“But, I think, a good disposition makes one, who in a disposition of a bad mind forms opinions consonant with itself, to form other such opinions [as itself], which perceptions some people due to inexperience call true, but I [consider] the one group to be better than the other, but in no way truer” (166b1-4, author’s translation).

Just as one’s disposition determines what his opinions and perceptions will be, so ζύντροφος can involve the idea that some diseases, or experiences in general, are determined by the person’s state, and so inhere as a “life-mate” in his constitution – an idea Thucydides here reports the Athenians learned was false.

In the passage that follows there is some suggestion that ζύντροφος indeed carries this notion. Here Thucydides attempts to support this claim about the disease’s indifference to species through an appeal to the facts: The birds and animals either stayed away or died after eating diseased flesh. However, these facts are expressed in language that markedly stresses perception. First of all, he has already claimed that the disease was seen to be (ἐδήλωσε) something not solely *human*. Not only does this word place the discussion on the plane of vision and seeing, but, by the way, its placement in the past tense identifies the Athenians as the ones who received the instruction, the illumination, just as δηλοῖ would have referred to readers in the present. That is, the Athenians at some point thought the disease was a ζύντροφόν τι. Next, making good his claim about the birds and animals, Thucydides says:

Τεκμήριον δέ· τῶν μὲν τοιούτων ὀρνίθων **ἐπίλειψις** σαφὴς ἐγένετο, καὶ οὐχ **έωρωντο** οὔτε ἄλλως οὔτε περὶ τοιοῦτον οὐδέν· οἱ δὲ κύνες μᾶλλον **αἴσθησιν** παρεῖχον τοῦ ἀποβαίνοντος διὰ τὸ **ζυνδιαιτᾶσθαι** (2.50.2).

He offers a visible indication (τεκμήριον).⁶⁵³ He notes the absence of carnivorous birds as “clear,” which adjective draws attention to itself through the oxymoron it creates when coupled with ἐπίλειψις. He then clarifies that such birds were not seen (έωρωντο) around a diseased corpse. Next, he turns to the dogs and notes that they even more so offered perception (αἴσθησιν)

⁶⁵³ For this perceptual connotation of τεκμήριον (close to its etymon τέκμαρ), in contrast to its use as a mark of certainty by mental inference later in Aristotelian rhetorical handbooks, see Hornblower 1987: 102.

of the occurrence (ἀποβαῖνον). And the reason they do so is because of their cohabitation with humans. This cohabitation, expressed through *ξυνδιατῆσθαι*, recalls *ξύντροφος* and ironically draws attention to the stark clarity of the evidence as a refutation of the disease as *ξύντροφος*. The fact that the dogs cohabited with the humans revealed to the Athenians the fact that the disease did not.

The irony and the oxymoron suggest that this passage is more than a medical description. The almost redundant emphasis on perception as a reliable means of knowledge which the Athenians could not deny not only suggests that they have been disabused of a false notion, but that that false notion relied on an equally false assumption of how humans perceive. Otherwise, the redundant emphasis would just be overkill. Thucydides is thus dramatizing how the Athenians were led by what they perceived to the incontrovertible conclusion that this disease was not a thing contingent upon the individual's perception, but a real occurrence (ἀποβαῖνον).

12.3.5 The Loss of Autarky

This same idea that the disease was a shared experience proceeding from a shared Reality appears soon again, this time with consequences on Pericles' funeral speech. When discussing the efficacy of treatments, Thucydides reports:

ἔν τε οὐδὲ ἐν κατέστη ἴαμα ὡς εἰπεῖν ὅτι χρῆν προσφέροντας ὠφελεῖν· τὸ γάρ τῳ
ξυνενεγκὸν ἄλλον τοῦτο ἔβλαπτεν. σῶμά τε αὐταρκες ὃν οὐδὲν διεφάνη πρὸς αὐτὸ
ἰσχύος πέρι ἢ ἀσθενείας, ἀλλὰ πάντα ξυνήρει καὶ τὰ πάσῃ διαίτῃ θεραπευόμενα (51.2-3).

“For the very thing that benefited one caused harm to another.” Not only does this statement suggest relativism was somehow at work in the benefit of the medicines applied, but it also specifically recalls the *tour de force* Protagoras achieves in the *Protagoras* that wins him the applause of the other sophists. Socrates, trying to elicit a definition of the good from Protagoras,

asks him if he considers the good and the beneficial to be synonymous. Protagoras denies it on the grounds that what is beneficial is simply too varied. Some things, he explains, are beneficial for men, but not for horses. What is good for oxen is bad for dogs. And even within the same creature olive oil is beneficial for human hair and skin, but doctors severely restrict its use by those who are sick (333d8-334c6) (cf. subsection 2.3.1). Thus, the variation of the beneficial disqualifies it as a candidate for a universal good and likewise suggests the physical properties of things are relative to the user (cf. subsection 6.3.1). Accordingly, when Thucydides reports this experience the Athenians had (that the very thing that benefited one caused harm to another), he has expressed an idea endowed with Protagorean associations.

Therefore, Thucydides apparently implies that Protagorean relativism was consonant with the pathology of the disease; but only apparently. For, he immediately records a fact which refutes any relativistic behavior in the disease, but rather groups them all together as victims alike, when he states that “it became transparently clear that no body was sufficient in itself against it for strength or weakness.” The polar expression “for strength or weakness” (ἰσχύος περὶ ἣ ἀσθενείας), indicating that the entire spectrum of physical conditions reacted in the same way to the disease, is the core of the refutation. If, as Protagoras taught, one’s pre-existing state, or ἕξις, determines what one perceives a thing to be – and that determines in turn whether or not a thing is beneficial or harmful to a person – yet, Thucydides points out, all pre-existing conditions succumbed to the disease, then on the deepest level the disease represented for the Athenians an inexorable, overwhelmingly univalent reality, the same alike to all. This last point Thucydides pointedly implies in the phrase ἀλλὰ πάντα ξυνήρει the force of which is well brought out in a scholiast’s gloss: συναγαγὸν ἡφάνιζε.⁶⁵⁴ The disease brought all bodies together

⁶⁵⁴ Hude 1927: ad loc.

in death. In this way Thucydides brings up an apparent relativism only to discount it in such a way as to recreate the Athenians' own disabusal.

Aspects of the language of the passage contribute to this meaning. When Thucydides remarks that “it became transparently clear that no body was sufficient in itself” the word is *διεφάνη*. Like the passage on the proof the birds and dogs gave, again the certainty of knowledge is vouched for by an appeal to one of the five senses, adding an element of irony to the Athenians' loss of confidence in the reliability of their individual perceptions. More notably, that body that is not sufficient in itself is expressed as *σῶμα αὐτάρκες*. This is the second direct challenge the plague narrative makes of Pericles' language, both in reference to the same claim he makes. The first had been a challenge through the phrase *τὸ εἶδος τῆς νόσου* of Pericles' claim that the Athenian was sufficient in himself for a great many “forms” (*εἶδη*) of action (see subsection 12.3.3). Now the powerlessness of the body of every single Athenian challenges the very idea of Pericles' autarky (or sufficiency in oneself). By this phrase Pericles had summarized the ideal of self-determinism that was realized in the Athenian state and in the Athenian individual, a self-determinism imported from Protagorean thought (subsection 12.3.1). Now, it becomes transparently clear (*διεφάνη*) to the Athenians that that claim was wrong. They are not sufficient in themselves, nor does their city render them so. There are occurrences, such as the plague, that demonstrably prove the powerlessness of the human animal to exert any influence on his world. Thus their faith in the very notion of a self-sufficient, self-determined human has been shaken because it depends on a theory of perception which their sufferings during the plague once again contradict. When therefore Thucydides uses the phrase *σῶμα αὐτάρκες*, he pinpoints the moment when the Athenians abandoned a worldview based on Protagorean assumptions and Periclean claims.

I have argued above that Pericles' construal of self-sufficiency is criticized by Herodotus in a polemical passage directed against both Pericles and Protagoras in which the Athenian lawgiver Solon tries to impress upon the Lydian king Croesus how dangerous the quest for autarky (self-sufficiency) is (subsection 8.3.2). This would mean that now during the plague the Athenians realize the truth of Solon's words to Croesus, a realization that Thucydides may in fact allude to with the rare phrase ἐν...οὐδὲ ἐν as though to echo Solon's words: ἀνθρώπου σῶμα ἐν οὐδὲν αὐταρκές ἐστι (1.32.8).⁶⁵⁵ And, like Croesus, they realize too late; and there are consequences for late learning.

12.3.6 Νόμοι Abandoned

Once the Athenians lose confidence in autarky, their condition quickly begins to deteriorate. Thucydides describes how despair (ἄθυμιά) at the first signs of symptoms took away their will to resist and how helping each other only caused the disease to spread more. Their loss of autarky, their utter powerlessness against the disease, has affected them on a deep psychological level. Their loss, one might say, has settled in their psyches. Thucydides stresses their sense of powerlessness by likening their plight to a military defeat (ὕπὸ τοῦ πολλοῦ κακοῦ νικώμενοι)⁶⁵⁶ (2.51.5) or comparing them to victims of assault (ὑπερβιαζομένου γὰρ τοῦ κακοῦ) (2.52.3). They are a people victimized by reality and suffering disillusionment. The major consequence of this great disillusionment is an increase in lawlessness (ἄνομία). This ἄνομία first occurs in burial norms. Relatives stop performing lamentations for their dead (2.51.5). They begin to dispose of the bodies of their friends and family in very untraditional ways, some even taking to stealing the pyres meant for others (2.52.4). Again, it is dire necessity and sheer want (σπάνει τῶν

⁶⁵⁵ Cf. Hornblower 1991: 324 for the rareness of the phrase.

⁶⁵⁶ First used at 2.47.4 without πολλοῦ. Its addition here has a heightening affect (see above, subsection 12.3.3).

ἐπιτηδείων) that determined their actions, actions which reverse Pericles' description of them in the funeral oration. He had said they showed great obedience to the "unwritten laws that carry acknowledged shame" (2.37.3); they now abandon it in favor of "shameless burial methods" (ἀναίσχυντοι θῆκαι) in the case of the most important of such unwritten laws.

The lawlessness then expands into the realm of legal and moral right and wrong, and in so doing reverses both the order in which Pericles had discussed law in Athens, as well as the formula Protagoras used to denote human society, namely, by treating the topic of δίκη first, then αἰδώς (subsection 9.3.2). By contrast, Thucydides maps the growth of lawlessness from the unwritten customs of shame to the written ordinances of law, thereby giving a sense of the unraveling of the Protagorean formulation and Periclean praise. But besides a reversal of order, this passage also depicts the Athenians abandoning that hallmark of civilization in general and of Athens, as Pericles says, in particular: νόμοι. Pericles had praised them for their respect (δέος) of the laws (2.37.3). But now Thucydides says they ignore the laws because they do not see the gift of longevity from the gods for good behavior or expect to live long enough to be brought to trial (2.53.4). They thus become the opposite of Pericles' Athenians, having no respect for law, order or justice. This reaction of theirs to their suffering is arresting. It is usually taken for granted that a people in the Athenians' situation would react with such lawlessness. But can one assume that this is the typical human reaction? At any rate, it does not appear that Thucydides assumed it to be. Instead, he inserts a subtle, but necessary, precondition to explain just why the Athenians reacted to the calamity so nihilistically; and that precondition involves Protagoras.

Thucydides describes their abandonment of the legal and moral code in significant language:

καὶ τὸ μὲν προσταλαιπωρεῖν τῷ δόξαντι καλῷ οὐδεὶς πρόθυμος ἦν, ἄδηλον νομίζων εἰ πρὶν ἐπ’ αὐτὸ ἐλθεῖν διαφθαρήσεται· ὅτι δὲ ἤδη τε ἡδὺ πανταχόθεν τε ἐς αὐτὸ κερδαλέον, τοῦτο καὶ καλὸν καὶ χρήσιμον κατέστη (2.53.3).

οὐδεὶς, although an exaggeration,⁶⁵⁷ still indicates that Thucydides means this change was cultural, city-wide. προσταλαιπωρεῖν brings to mind the incredible physical and psychological distress the plague has caused the Athenians. κατέστη, recalling the crucial and climactic passage discussed above (subsection 12.3.5), where Thucydides reports that no one cure established itself (κατέστη), implies that an ethical transvaluation is their remedy (ἵαμα) and coping mechanism. That transvaluation involves a transition to a new morality, the pleasant (ἡδύ) and whatever is expedient to that end (κερδαλέον), from a pre-plague morality, whose defining characteristics are denoted by καλὸν καὶ χρήσιμον.

Just what the old morality was, or how it is to be understood, is not clear. The second part, χρήσιμον, is surprising, and contrary to expectation, as one might have expected ἀγαθόν, in order to have the traditional ideal of καλοκἀγαθία expressed. Rendering it “expedient”⁶⁵⁸ does not produce much of a difference between it and κερδαλέον, unless one stresses that the latter is what is advantageous for immediate gratification of base desires while the former is what is expedient to honorable things. But if it has that sense of enlightened self-interest, then it jars with its use elsewhere in Thucydides, especially the Melian dialogue, where it is the alternative to moral, just behavior,⁶⁵⁹ and so very odd company with καλόν.

It is likelier then that it is a simple substitute for ἀγαθόν and like it means generally good, decent behavior, as indeed it often does, especially in a political context.⁶⁶⁰ This being the case, a link is established between this passage and Protagorean terminology which, I have argued, took

⁶⁵⁷ Gomme 1965: ad loc.

⁶⁵⁸ So Hornblower 1991: ad loc.

⁶⁵⁹ 5.90, 5.91.2, 5.92, 5.98. Also, Diodotus uses it to capture the *crux* of the Mitylenian dilemma (3.44.4).

⁶⁶⁰ LSJ s.v. I.2.

advantage of the idea of use inherent in such words as χρήματα and χρηστός to argue for the legitimacy of tradition (subsections 6.2.2., 6.3.3).

Considered in this light, χρήσιμον becomes perfect company for καλόν since this adjective too establishes another link with Protagorean thought. καλόν's first occurrence in this passage is in the clause καὶ τὸ μὲν προσταλαιπωρεῖν τῷ δόξαντι καλῷ οὐδεὶς πρόθυμος ἦν. What Thucydides means to imply through the participle δόξαντι has not been clearly understood.⁶⁶¹ But Rusten is surely right to translate “for whatever seemed right”⁶⁶² and Blanco's quotation marks are fully justified: “no one was willing to persevere in received ideas about ‘the good.’”⁶⁶³ In other words, Thucydides signifies that the pre-plague morality of the Athenians was that the honorable is whatever it seems to one to be – the Protagorean claim *in nuce*.⁶⁶⁴ The Athenians here abandon an ideology based on relativist ideas, and do so because of the reality of their suffering. For, Thucydides says, to abide by it required hardship (προσταλαιπωρεῖν). Here in the juxtaposition of προσταλαιπωρεῖν and δόξαντι the basic dilemma of the Athenians is summed up. On the one hand, in this crisis now more than ever they need to abide by the norms and laws of the polis. But, on the other, the hardship is of a severe sort (προσταλαιπωρεῖν), and the norms and laws are nothing transcendental, but merely the product of the individual's perception (δόξαντι). The reality of the plague thus vividly exposes to them the emptiness of their ideology and the confrontation of the two ideas explains why they reacted so nihilistically. The formulation of morality that relativism offered them proved to contain no incentive when one's situation became desperate.

⁶⁶¹ Gomme 1965: ad loc tentatively offers “what *had* been thought honorable”?

⁶⁶² 1989: ad loc.

⁶⁶³ 1998:78.

⁶⁶⁴ Cf. Stahl 2003: 79: “The ἄγραφοι νόμοι...to which Pericles referred as the pride of Athens...are no longer honored on the grounds of amounting to ‘τῷ δόξαντι καλῷ’ (‘what seemed to be noble’).”

12.3.7 Realism Adopted

When the Athenians reach this point of moral transvaluation, they drop the pre-plague morality and espouse a new one which is in effect the Realism that Thucydides has already introduced in the *History* through the speech of the Athenian emissaries at Sparta. Just as the emissaries had articulated a doctrine of self-interest (ὠφελία, ξυμφέροντα) that justified international aggrandizement (πλεονεκτεῖν), so now the Athenians respond to the horrors of the plague by adopting the calculus of immediate desire (ἤδη ἡδύ) and whatever is conducive to achieving that desire (κερδαλέον). This is no mere hedonism, as Thucydides makes clear when he clarifies that the wrongs the Athenians were committing constituted ἀμαρτήματα that were punishable by law (μέχρι τοῦ δίκην γενέσθαι) (2.53.4) and resulted in material gain for the perpetrators (2.53.1). Thus, what is “immediately pleasant” for the Athenians is unlawful acquisition. They do indulge themselves and act καθ’ ἡδονήν and πρὸς τὸ τερπνόν; but it is their wrongful gain that enables them to do so and that makes their behavior resemble the Realist principles articulated by the emissaries.

As a matter of fact, the suffering Athenians do the emissaries one better. The emissaries had only implied that they would be within their rights, if they tossed aside the law (ἀποθέμενοι τὸν νόμον) (1.77.3), where the Athenians actually do so. Things have thus come full circle. The Realism that from the beginning characterized Athenian foreign policy has now infiltrated the city.⁶⁶⁵ This idea, that the plague represents a surge of lawlessness *for the city*, comes to the fore in Thucydides’ remark that the plague “was the first beginning of lawlessness in other respects as well [and] to a greater degree for the city,” where the oxymoronic combination of “first

⁶⁶⁵ For a similar discontinuity between the city of Athens and its international behavior, cf. Strasburger 2009: 208, 210 and (forming a complement to Strasburger) Stahl 2003: 50. However, they regard the discontinuity as one of perspective, while I suggest that it is meant to be considered real.

beginning” (πρῶτόν τε ἤρξε) with “to a greater degree” (ἐπὶ πλεον ἄνομίας) draws attention to “for the city” (τῇ πόλει). Like the plague, Realism came from outside (2.48.1).⁶⁶⁶

In sum, Thucydides depicts the complete adoption of a Realist philosophy in Athens as the result of the discredit of Protagorean assumptions that the sufferings in the plague produced. Those assumptions did not give rise to any Realist theory; but they did, Thucydides suggests, create the right condition for the recommendation of Realism. And that right condition was, in short, the shock and disillusionment produced when an undeniable reality confronted the Athenians at a time when their acknowledgement of such a reality was collectively minimal. This of course is not to say that Thucydides suggests all the Athenians were students of Protagoras. But it does suggest that he had come to the conclusion that certain ideas, a certain habit of mind and a certain conceptualization of the democracy had developed in Athens (transmitted especially through speeches), that privileged perception over reality, belief over truth, seeming over being, and that the plague constituted a check to those ideas, in being a visible, physical sickness that exposed the hidden, intellectual sickness in Athens that until then had only been ὑπουλος.⁶⁶⁷

12.4 IRONY AND TRAGEDY

This reading of the plague narrative implies that Thucydides isolates the Athenians’ intellectual state as a crucial factor in the chain of causation of the war, specifically their want of an intellectual state adequate to encounter the war and all it would bring. This is confirmed when

⁶⁶⁶ On the pre-existence of moral problems in Athens, there is a perceptive scholium to this passage: “διαβολὴν ἐμφαίνει τῶν Ἀθηναίων τὸ ἐπὶ πλεον κείμενον” (Hude 1927: 142).

⁶⁶⁷ I borrow this word from Pl. *Grg.* 518e4, which likely expressed an idea current in the second half of the fifth century (cf. S. *OT.* 1396; Th. 8.64.5).

one examines what Thucydides says broadly on intellectual preparedness, or the lack thereof, in the plague narrative. And what he says presents that confirmation in such a way as to bring out its ironic and tragic undertones.

12.4.1 Intellectual Unpreparedness

This intellectual unpreparedness in the Athenians reveals itself at key points in the plague narrative. First, it is implicit in the reason why Thucydides states he will give a description of the plague in the first place. After uncharacteristically⁶⁶⁸ stating that he will leave the causes (αἰτίαι) to be discovered to others, he declares that he will only give a description, and for a puzzling purpose:

ἐγὼ δὲ οἷόν τε ἐγίγνετο λέξω, καὶ ἀφ' ὧν ἂν τις σκοπῶν, εἴ ποτε καὶ αὐθις ἐπιπέσοι, μάλιστα ἂν ἔχοι τι προειδὼς μὴ ἀγνοεῖν, ταῦτα δηλώσω...(2.48.3).

Parry first pointed out that this sentence cannot be made to say that Thucydides will relay firsthand information so that those in the future can know how to treat it.⁶⁶⁹ Besides the wording itself, Thucydides, far from noting what did or did not help, pervades his description with an overwhelming sense that nothing helped at all. Instead, he merely offers knowledge (τι προειδὼς)⁶⁷⁰ and freedom from ignorance (μὴ ἀγνοεῖν). But to know and not be ignorant of what? Again, the trend is to regard Thucydides as writing for medical purposes and to understand him to be offering knowledge of symptoms and recognition of the disease. But if knowledge of the symptoms is his aim, his account should stop when the actual symptoms stop (2.49.8); and if recognition of the disease is likewise an aim, then he merely sets the future reader up for that despair (ἀθυμία), either regarding himself or others, that Thucydides says was the chief effect of

⁶⁶⁸ Cf. 1.23.4-6.

⁶⁶⁹ Parry 1969: 109-110. Cf. Stahl 2003: 31n18.

⁶⁷⁰ Not "knowledge in advance" (cf. Rusten 1989: ad loc & ad 51.6).

recognition in the Athenians' case (2.51.4). It would seem then that the knowledge and recognition Thucydides wishes to enable is of a different, deeper kind.⁶⁷¹

If so, then he implies that the Athenians are devoid of this knowledge and are incapable of this recognition, whatever it is; that they are, in short, intellectually unprepared. This impression is confirmed when one sees that in the plague narrative the Athenians are not always of sound mind. For instance, Thucydides records that some, upon recovering from sickness, fell victim to the “foolish expectation” (ἐλπίδος...κούφης) that they were immune from all diseases (2.51.6). Far from realizing the frailness of humanity, these individuals instead conceive a notion of their invincibility! Similarly, when Thucydides discusses the lawlessness that set in, he notes that the Athenians reacted to the disease by daring to do “what one before denied liking to do” (ἂ πρότερον ἀπεκρύπτετο μὴ καθ’ ἡδονὴν ποιεῖν) (2.53.1). This statement suggests a want of self-knowledge. Pericles had asserted that Athenian society is open and tolerant, if anybody “does something indulgently” (καθ’ ἡδονήν τι δρᾶν) (2.37.2). This gives the impression that Athens, unlike Sparta, is not a place where impulses will be repressed. However, it now appears that Pericles’ claim was false, and that the Athenians have actually been concealing their fondness for doing certain things. Was Pericles lying? A look at what those certain things were suggests that he was not. As discussed above (subsection 12.3.6), those things resulted in the transvaluation of Athenian morality from a relative goodness (καλὸν καὶ χρήσιμον) to self-gratification through illegal acquisition of what belongs to another (ἡδὺ καὶ τὸ ἐξ αὐτὸ κερδαλέον). In other words, before the plague struck, the Athenians were optimistic on human nature, just as much as Protagoras was (section 4.1, subsection 8.2.1). But now they have been disabused of that opinion and adopt a more realistic, Hobbesian, view which, it is important to note, they had previously

⁶⁷¹ Cf. Thomas 2006: 100-103 who regards Thucydides here to be using medical language and a polemical posture to create a tragic and pathetic effect.

denied. Pericles' claim then in the funeral speech, compared with the obverse of that claim in the plague narrative, suggests that a key factor in determining their reaction to the plague was self-knowledge, or the want thereof.

This intellectual unpreparedness not only supports this reading of the plague narrative as a depiction of the ways in which the Athenians were compelled to abandon relativist assumptions in the face of an undeniable reality and to espouse now fully a Realist philosophy which was already active in other areas of the Athenian state. It also stands in ironic contrast to the great material and military preparedness Pericles ascribes to Athens in more than one passage.⁶⁷² The fully prepared city is now lacking one crucial resource: Sound thinking, or σωφροσύνη.⁶⁷³ But, even more than that, it directly upsets Pericles' claim for Athens as a cultural, political and intellectual example for all of Greece. The city that was supposed to be the education of the Greeks turns out to have been itself bereft of sound thinking; its citizens who were supposed to be sufficient in themselves for almost any feat of mind or strength turn out to have held opinions completely out of touch with reality. Yet, it is this very disconnect with reality that recommends to them a political philosophy which plays so detrimental a role for them in the course of the war.⁶⁷⁴ It is tragic irony, all the more so in being found in a work of history.

12.5 CONCLUSION

Thucydides not only found Protagorean ideas in the funeral speech that Pericles delivered at the end of the first year of the war, but he also found in them a contribution to the historical

⁶⁷² E.g. 1.142-143, 2.13, 2.36.1-3. Cf. Allison 1988: 1-10, 45-60; Foster 2010: 162-174.

⁶⁷³ For the Athenians' need of this virtue, cf. Strasburger 2009: 211-214, although whether or not the Spartans serve, as he contends, as the model of the virtue is another question.

⁶⁷⁴ Tritle 2006: 487-491 and above, n621.

explanation of the course and outcome of the war. They presented to him part of the reason why a Realist philosophy became so prevalent in Athens as finally to dominate by around 416 BC its entire political agenda and policy-making. Individuals such as Cleon and Alcibiades of course play a role here, as does the correspondence between plans and the possibility of success for those plans in a given time and place. But ideas and intellectual assumptions and commitments likewise exert an influence, inasmuch as they set the parameters for plans and determine which ones will present themselves to an individual's or state's consciousness. The Protagorean elements in the funeral oration and plague narrative thus make a contribution to the intellectual aspect of Thucydides' history.

That contribution is revealed in the interplay of speech and event. Thucydides finds in the sufferings of the Athenians during the plague a series of attacks on the claims that Pericles makes about Athenian culture and politics in the funeral speech. He then describes each of these attacks in such a way as to bring out the contrast between the relativist assumptions they imply and the undeniable, and undeniably horrible, reality of disease and death they represent. Finally, he suggests that this experienced contrast discredited the Protagorean conceptualization of democracy as government based on opinion and perception for a Realist conceptualization based on self-interest and acquisition, ultimately holding the relativist ideas of the funeral speech responsible for the final victory of Realism in their failure to equip the Athenians collectively with adequate intellectual preparedness. Instead, these ideas, formulated by Protagoras, voiced by Pericles, encouraged delusions in the Athenians of absolute self-determinism in politics, in ethics, even in the natural world, delusions of which their sufferings in the plague painfully disabused them.

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